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THE
AMIR HAMZA
AN
ORIENTAL NOVEL.

PART I.

DEDICATED TO NAWAB MOWLVI
SYED AMIR HOSAIN, C. I. E.
PRESIDENCY MAGISTRATE—CALCUTTA.

BY
SHEIK SAJJAD HOSAIN.

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ERRATA.

	PAGE	LINE	FOR	READ
Preface	i	31	heroe	hero
	ii	18	begining	beginning
	17	19	more exal	the more exalted
	24	12	desireable	desirable
	26	28	demon	demoness
	32	19	He	She
	39	24	rober	robber
	54	19	nights and gave	nights gave (or omit "and").
	66	18	sprang up to his feet	sprang to his feet (or omit "up")
	77	13	nose	noses
	87	8	descendent	descendant
	108	18	gapin	gaping
	109	27	terrestrial	terrestrial
	110	28	retured	returned
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	151f		chap. XXV	XXIV
	"	35	powered	powdered
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	157	40	apparantus	apparatus

PREFACE.

Amir Hamzah is a beautiful oriental novel. It is in four parts, the first of which I have undertaken to produce in English. I hope to take up the second part as soon as possible. The book is very much to the taste of native readers, and had once an extensive sale. The beauty of the novel, combined with my own idea of self-improvement, prompted me to reproduce the work in English. This is in fact my first attempt at writing in which I have received material aid from Mr. C. J. Whincope Smith, the principal of the Bhagalpur Madrassah. He has very kindly revised the translations from time to time, and I thank him heartily for his friendly feelings towards me.

This book, it is said, was composed during the time of Akber-the-Great by his minister Amir Khusro to divert the Emperor's attention from the *Mahabharat*, the exploits in which had created an impression on his mind. It describes the chivalries of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of our prophet Mahomed, and the practical tricks of his friend Amar. Amir Hamzah was the son of Khajeh Abdul Motulleb, the chief of the Bani Hashim family, and was born in Arabia in the city of Mecca. Before the birth of our Prophet, he followed the religion of Abraham, and extended his arms and brought the idolatrous tribes to a sense of the True God. When Mahomed was born, he assumed *Islamism* and fought for the cause of *Islam*.

As is the case with native novelists, the book has been ornamented by numerous exaggerations and colorings, but it is an undeniable fact that Amir Hamzah was a great hero of his age, who carried his banners far and wide, and subverted many kings and defeated many heroes in his eagerness to extend the true religion.

As he was brave, so was he kind, merciful and generous; he was an emblem of valour and virtue, and he met his death at a well advanced age in the memorable battle of Ohud by a negro slave of Hinda, the wife of Abu Sofian, who took him by surprise and slew him on the spot.

In writing this book in English, I have avoided, as much as possible, the superfluities and exaggerations of the original, so as to make the book inviting and pleasant to English readers, and have sketched out the facts with the air of a novelist, which, I hope, will meet with the approbation of my readers. This being my first labour, I trust, I am entitled to some indulgence for any blunders and inconsistencies that may be found in my writing. I am neither a graduate, nor a man of any significance, but a Mahomedan, born and bred, in the unpopular district of Bhagalpore, where English literature is just begining to be appreciated by the Mahomedan community.

CHAPTER I.

A MIDST the celestial plain of Iran, there lived a sovereign by name Kobad Kamran in the city of Madayen. In kindness towards his subjects and strictness of justice, he had no parallel. Peace and prosperity reigned in his dominions; whilst oppression and tyranny were lulled to slumber in solitary repose. The poor and needy were scarce. The scarcity of persons deserving of bounty was a standing puzzle to the people. The weak and strong stood on the same platform. In short, so great was the general harmony that falcons and sparrows might be said to roost in the same nest. The old sympathised with the young; gratitude laid no claims at the door of others; like a watchman's eyes, the door of the houses, were kept open. The sword of justice was at work for the most trivial theft; thieves dared not utter even the word of theft stealthily. If a wayfarer happened to find some thing on the way, he would look for its owner to make it over to him. Despite all his courage and gallantry, Rustam * was but a trifle before the prowess and bravery of the lion-hearted monarch. He had some forty wise ministers around him. Compared with them, Plato and Aristotle were mere school boys. They were singular in their sagacity, intelligence, and wisdom. Before these worthies, Galen, Euclid, and Pythagoras deserved no celebrity in the arts of physics, mathematics, astrology and astronomy. The monarch was also surrounded with seven hundred companions, each of whom, boasted of a proficiency in moral science, and social laws. There were moreover some four thousand brave men under the banner of the king. If heroes like Sham, Nariman, Zal, and Rustam, happened to confront them, they would surely throw away their shield with humility and submission. Some three hundred tributary kings, each of whom, was himself independent, prostrated themselves before the throne with meek submission. A fierce cavalry of ten hundred thousand horsemen, and forty bands of slaves, wearing golden waistbands, and gracefully attired in embroidered uniforms, richly laden with precious jewels, adorned the celestial court of the monarch. They were prompt in their duties, and ready to sell their lives in the service of their royal master.

A legendary hero.

In the same city, there lived a physician of the name of Khaja Bakht Jamal, who traced his descent from the prophet Daniel. In the science of physic, geomancy and astronomy he distinguished himself among the ancient physicians. Malik Alkash, the king's minister, who had often tested his words, offered himself in all earnestness to become his disciple. He reposed so much confidence in the physician, and was so fond of him, that he could hardly bear to be out of his sight even for a moment. In the course of a short time, Alkash acquired such proficiency in geomancy, that he became an accomplished scholar of the Khaja, and his renown spread far and wide.

One day, he spoke to the Khaja. "Sire! during the night, as I felt disquieted in my vacant hours, I threw a dice for you, and on consulting the figures, I found that your stars prognosticated troubles for some time to come, and that they would remain unfavourable to you for ~~forty~~ days. I therefore beseech you, sire, not to step out of your house for these days; nor place your reliance on any body. For my part, I should also prefer taking leave of you, and bearing with patience the separation of your company." Following the advice of Alkash, the Khaja shut himself up in his house in order to lead a life of seclusion and severing all connexions for a time, became a veritable recluse.

When thirty-nine days had passed away without any incident, the Khaja lost all patience on the fortieth day. Taking a stick in his hand, he issued forth from his house to pay a visit to Alkash, and communicate to him his welfare, for he was his devoted, faithful and only friend in the town. Thoughtlessly he left the main road, and traversing over a barren tract got to the bank of a river. As it was summer time, the Khaja got very much exhausted by the parching heat of the sun, and took shelter under a tree. All on a sudden, he caught a glimpse of a splendid building in front of him, the enclosure wall of which was somewhat delapidated. Prompted by curiosity, he walked slowly towards the building, several portions of which, he noticed, were in ruins. The hall, which still stood in a solitary condition, presented the door of a room, which was walled up with bricks. The Khaja removed the bricks and saw to his right a small trap-door locked up. He intended to break open the door with a stone, but no sooner did he touch the padlock, than it opened at once, and fell to the ground. He stepped inside, and found a cellar contain-

ing seven heaps of treasure, and precious jewels deposited by the King Shaddad. Overtaken by fright, he could take nothing out of the hoard, but retraced his steps from the cellar, and proceeded straight to the house of Alkash to tell him of the discovery. Alkash was overjoyed at the sight of the Khaja, and having made him sit on a sofa, spoke with marked reverence "Sire! today is the fortieth day of your seclusion; what made you take the trouble of coming here? I would have myself gone to you tomorrow morning and honored myself thereby." The Khaja after exchanging a few words, related to him as follows. "Although the star of my destiny shone so bright that I saw an inexhaustible hoard of treasure, yet, as it belonged to the king's dominion, a man of my impoverished circumstance could hardly take it. I have therefore considered it advisable to give you, as the king's minister, and my intimate friend, a clue to this unfathomable wealth, and I should be satisfied with any thing you would be pleased to offer me out of it."

Alkash was overjoyed with the news of the seven heaps of hidden treasure, and immediately ordered two steeds, one for himself and the other for his companion. Accompanied by Khaja, he rode through the same barren tract by which his companion had passed before. On reaching the place, he was so bewildered at the sight of the treasure-heaps, that he well nigh lost his life from joy. A suspicion, however, crept into his mind that should the Khaja, who had got an insight into the thing, happen to reveal the secret of the treasure to the King, he would not only have to pay more than what he gained, but would also lose all his wealth and dignity, and be thrown into prison, his family put to trouble and his house razed to the ground. He therefore made up his mind to murder the Khaja on the spot and take possession of the hidden treasure without the least fear of disclosure. Thus maturing his plans, he felled the poor old man to the ground, and getting on his chest put the dagger to his neck. The Khaja was astounded at the conduct of his friend and exclaimed. "Alkash; what has become of you? Is virtue rewarded by vice? Is this the return for my kindness? What fault have I committed that has led you to so foul a deed? Although the old man groaned for his life, yet nothing could prevail on the demoniacal spirit of the steel-hearted miscreant. He did not feel the least compassion for his victim. When the old man found it impossible to effect his release from the grasp of his foe, and beheld his death

lurking on his face, he proceeded as follows:—"O Alkash! Since you are determined to take my life and daub your hands with my innocent blood, I leave behind two requests, which I may mention here, should you condescend to carry them out for me. My days have come to an end, and I wish to carry with me some token of your gratitude." The ungrateful wretch told him to speak out at once what he had to say. The poor Khaja addressed him as follows.—"Listen to me, O Alkash; save and except for this day, there is no means of provision in my house. For God's sake send some expense to my bereaved family, besides let me tell you that my wife is in the family way; tell her please, that if she is delivered of a son, she must give him the name of Buzurchemeher; if a daughter is born to her, she is at liberty to give her any name she likes. So saying, the Khaja closed his eyes and began to repeat the * *kalma*. He prayed for his salvation, because he was about to lose his life at the hands of a scoundrel; the next instant, his head was severed from the body; his steed was also killed, and their remains buried in the cellar. The Vazir then locked the door of the cellar and repaired to the river bank to wash off the blood from his hands and the dagger. This done, he returned home rejoicing at the successful termination of the event. The next day he again rode to the old building in magnificent style, and having inspected the house, ordered the Darogah to level it with the ground and have a garden made for him, which, he said, should be enclosed with a marble-wall, and should have a Bungalow for him to sit in, to be made of turquois, and to be gracefully furnished with rare and valuable furniture. The orders passed were at once obeyed; the Darogah sent for the architects, labourers, and sculptors from the town and set them to work.

In the course of a short time, the Bungalow was ready with its wall and garden, Alkash was much pleased with the work, and gave the garden the name of *Bag Bedad*. He then went to the house of the Khaja, and having communicated to his widow his last request, consoled her, giving at the same time some money for her maintenance, with an assurance that further help would be given her, if she stood in need. As for the Khaja, Alkash told her that he had been sent out on a trading expedition towards China, and would return home laden with immense profits. Saying this, he returned home carefully preserving the secret of his foul deed.

CHAPTER. II.

BIRTH OF KHAJA BUZURCHEMEHER AND REVELATION OF THE SECRET.

AFTER this eventful tragedy, the widow of the deceased, was safely delivered of a son on Friday at an auspicious moment. The mother at first shed showers of tears recalling to her mind her beloved husband. Then looking at the handsome features of her darling child, caressed him with the fervour of a mother's love, and having returned thanks to the Almighty, gave the boy the name of Buzurchemeher according to the advice of her deceased husband. The boy was nursed in his mother's lap and Heaven protected him from all calamities. His delicate countenance, so handsomely carved by the hands of Providence, paled the beauties of the world : his bright and majestic appearance bespoke his good fortune, dignity, and future eminence. When the boy was five years old, he was taken over to a teacher, who trained the children of the village, and who was one of his father's pupils; he received him with joy and tenderness, and devoted his heart and soul to the training of the lad. It was the boy's practice to remain with his teacher the whole day reading and writing, and when allowed leave, to return home and partake of the frugal meal, which his mother would provide him with, after her day's toil.

One day there was nothing to eat, and Buzurchemeher unable to suppress his hunger, asked his mother to let him have something, which he could sell, and procure victuals with. "My son," responded she, "your father has left nothing, which I can give you for sale; but there is a book of your grandfather on a shelf of the house, which was written a long time ago. Your father wanted to sell it, and make use of its profits, but when he approached the shelf to take down the book, a venomous black snake darted forth, hissing at him and he drew back in fright. If you can get access to it, you may dispose of it and provide yourself with bread. There is nothing else which I can give you for sale.

Buzurchemeher went to the shelf and removed the book, but the snake was no more to be seen. Going over a few pages of the book, he wept bitterly; then looking at another part, burst into a fit of laughter, his yellow appearance turning crimson. All

who were present, were surprised at this act of Buzurchemehar ; while his mother took him for a maniac. In the perplexity of her heart, she ejaculated. " Pray fetch at once a surgeon to open my son's blood-vessel, or get an amulet from some body to be suspended from his neck to protect him from the influence of the evil spirit. He is my only son and in my helplessness my only hope, and if he goes raving, I shall be undone."

When Buzurchemehar found her in anxiety, he said " Mother ! don't feel concerned for any thing that you have seen ; the time is not far distant, when we shall be relieved from our present dire distress, and our miseries will give place to unbounded happiness ; our fate in slumber, is soon to awake ; our friends will be happy and foes dispirited. This book has neither turned me mad, nor has it affected my brains ; but it has unravelled to me all the mysteries, past and future. I wept because, Alkash has murdered my innocent father, whose remains are still lying on the ground without a coffin, and a grave. I laughed because, I shall avenge my father's death and be the minister of the king of this country. Be no more anxious for bread, there shall be enough victuals and to spare, and you can distribute them to others freely." Saying this, he repaired to a grocer's shop with a maid-servant ; and asked him to give her daily a certain quantity of flour, sugar, ghee (clarified butter) &c., whatever she required, without showing anxiety for the price. He asked in reply as to when he would receive the price, and have his accounts adjusted. " Do you venture to demand price of me ?" exclaimed Buzurchemehar. " Don't you recollect having taken several thousand maunds of wheat from a villager named Chand ? You have been base enough to poison the man, together with his four sons, in order to secure possession of his corn. Were I to disclose the secret to the tribunal, how do you think you would be rewarded ?" The shop-keeper finding his secret fully known to Buzurchemehar, threw his turban at his feet in utter dismay, and thus spoke " This shop is yours Sir ; you are at perfect liberty to get any thing from here and at any time you like, but pray throw a veil over the secret you have just mentioned." Buzurchemehar then went to the shop of a butcher with the maid-servant, and asked him to give her daily some fresh meat. He asked when his accounts would be adjusted and the money paid him. " Have you not," thundered Buzurchemehar, " killed a herdsman, named Kaos, because he demanded of you the price of his several thousand sheep that you had purchased of him, and have you not buried him in a chamber of your house, in order to deprive

him of his money? What would be your fate, if I were to send his heirs to the king's court for justice?" The butcher began to tremble like an aspen leaf, and having thrown himself prostrate at the feet of Buzurchemehar, said, "My body and soul are at your service; I shall, without fail, give to your maid-servant every day, the best meat, and as much as, she may require and never will I demand the price of it; but pray have regard for my life and honour, do not give utterance to the secret you are in possession of." Buzurchemehar played the same part with a banker, who fixed for him an allowance of five Dinars per diem, and then returning home in triumph with all his necessities assured, waited patiently for the day of vengeance, spending most of his time with his friends and companions, and in devotion to the Almighty.



CHAPTER. III.

INVITATION OF THE KING BY ALKASH IN BAG BEDAD AND THE ENTERTAINMENT AND REJOICINGS THEREIN.

WHEN *Bag Bedad* was completed in all its perfection, it represented the traditional paradise of the King Shaddad. Alkash was so transported with joy, that he could hardly reflect upon the troubles of this, or of the other world; nor could he contain himself in the extreme ecstacy of his joy. "Sire!" said he to the king. "I have through the grace of your Majesty laid out a delightful garden. It has been gracefully furnished with the rarest and choicest of fruit trees and flowers, all of which have been procured from distant climes at great expense. I have spared no pains in procuring skilful gardeners; nor have I spared money in getting together a lot of men, whose ingenuity in the art of gardening has obtained them a far-famed reputation; all these persons vie with each other in their professional arts and have so adorned the garden with flowers and evergreens, that famous artists like * Mani and Bahzad are ashamed of what they have accomplished. Despite all this, the garden looks barren to me, unless your Majesty condescends to step into it. I therefore beseech your Majesty to do me the honor of taking a walk in the garden at any time it pleases your Majesty; that it may flourish by your august presence, and every blossom and flower may display its beauty in different shapes. Should your Majesty vouchsafe also to taste some fresh fruit, it will do no less honor to my humble-self. The king accepted his minister's invitation, who made a profound bow, and having offered presents to the king, departed. Returning to the garden, he engaged himself in the preparation of the feast. In an instant everything requisite for a sumptuous feast was got ready. A variety of dishes were prepared and various sorts of fruits assorted in trays. The entertainers were invited and places selected for the display of fire-works. Arrangements were made for an illumination and thousands of glasses were fitted up. Chandeliers, shades and wall-lamps were cleaned and wax and camphor candles set in their proper

The celebrated Chinese painters.

places. Shortly after, the king arrived at the garden with his nobles, courtiers, and attendants. Alkash had prepared for the king a beautiful ventilated *Takht-rawn* (portable throne), which was artistically set with diamonds and rubies, and fitted up with four emerald peacocks on its four corners. In the cavity of each of these peacocks, was placed a perfumery vase beautifully studded with jewels; and on each side of it were attached two hanging pots of narcissus, garnished with emerald leaves, and diamond flowers, and studded with pieces of topaz. When the king was reported to be coming by the messenger and horsemen posted for the purpose. Alkash proceeded to receive him with his sons, and respectable companions and took with him a throne and forty elephants richly caparisoned having on their backs brocade housings, golden * *Howdahs* and † *Amaris* of exquisite workmanship, set with precious jewels and ornamented with gold and silver chains and ‡ *Haikals* encircling their necks. Their foreheads were covered with embroidered sheets and their tusks encased in silver and enamelled cases; while their trunks were covered with fine tapestries. The *Mahouts* (elephant drivers), posted in all the pride becoming their position, had diamond-handled hooks in their hands, and were richly attired. They had Benares turbans over their heads, and wore brocade garments girdled with embroidered waist-bands. Their mates were clothed in semi-trousers and jackets of valuable stuffs, interwoven with gold and silver flowers. Around their waists were folded Benares scarfs and over their heads were wrapped up small embroidered turbans; while they carried in their hands spears and staffs of precious workmanship. A cavalcade of swift and spirited horses enhanced the grandeur of the scene. On they went galloping and prancing in beautiful array under their smart riders. They were some two hundred in number mostly Arabians, Mesopotamions, English, Turkish and Tartaric; besides there were one hundred and twenty five ponies of Pegu, Assam, Rangoon, Tibet, Java and Bokhara. They were swift, stout and beautiful animals and had their manes gracefully clipped and perfumed with sweet scents. The saddles were ornamented with gold, and covered with embroidered clothes. Plumes, cruppers, collars, &c. were fitted up gracefully. Nets of twisted silver and silk thread covered these animals. Over these were placed jewelled armours, the grooms leading the horses with silken ropes fastened to the reins. Two well-trimmed grooms with silver rings round their wrists and red turbans over their heads

* A litter used on an elephant.

† A litter or seat with a canopy to ride on a camel.

‡ An ornament worn round the neck of an elephant.

ran on each side of a horse with fly-flappers of exquisite workmanship in their hands. There were also several thousand camels of various regions with seats on their backs and housings of finest stuffs. No pains were spared to decorate these animals too, while their drivers guided them with an air of importance befitting the occasion.

The minister was not satisfied with these preparations alone, but also carried with himself several gold and silver trays of precious jewels, and valuable ornaments, as well as, several other trays of armours, swords of various places, daggers, knives, picquets, scimitars, firelocks, guns, revolvers, as also pieces of the finest stuffs, and cloths and shawls of various descriptions. All these he presented to the king in the vestibule, then catching the foot of the king's throne entered the parlour. The king was astonished at the elysian embellishments of the garden, the entrance gate of which was high and spacious. The doors were made of ebony, and their side-frames of sandal wood. They were made strong with silver and iron nails.

CHAPTER. IV.

ARRIVAL OF THE KING IN "BAG BEDAD" AND INVESTITURE OF ALKASH WITH ROBES IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE ON THE PEACOCK THRONE.

THE marble enclosure wall of the garden so admirably built by the minister, had its doors beautifully adorned with jewels and mosaic work ; while trees of precious gems were carved out in the wall here and there with branches and leaves of emerald and blossoms and flowers of ruby. On these branches sat nightingales, starlings, doves, turtle-doves and other singing birds, which were made of turquoise, sapphires and other gems. The lower end of the wall was inlaid with enamelled vines, which were tessellated with creepers made of emerald. These creepers were clustered with grapes of pearl ; while the real branches of grapes hanging on the trees were enclosed in embroidered coverings, that were drawn tight with twisted silver and silk thread. The garden had within it neat and graceful gravel-walks. The flower beds had a variety of sweet-scented flowers. Some of these, were surrounded either with myrtles beautifully clipped or with an array of champa (*Michelia champaca*) trees : while others had on their four corners either Molsri (*Mimus elengi*), cypress, Shamshad (*Buxus sempervirens*) ; Sanobar (*Pinus Pinea*) or Harsingar (*Nyctathes arbourtristis*) trees. Rearing up their heads to the sky, the trees diffused their sweet odours around. The branches of the flower-trees wafted by the sweet zephyr, fondled each other in tender affection ; while those of the fruit-bearing trees overloaded with their fruits, waved to and fro in majestic pride. Geese, swans, doves, turtle-doves, Indian cranes, snow pheasants &c., sported merrily on the grass and the gravel-walks. Nightingales in thousands poured forth their melody on the branches of the flower-trees ; while doves and turtle-doves cloaked in their ashy dress cooed from the branches of the cypress and sanobar trees. Each parterre had four vaulted doors hung on silver wires, and on its borders were pillars enclosed in silver cases. The walls of the garden glittered with peacocks, which danced merrily with their tails out-stretched. Delicate damsels of resplendent beauty, richly attired with graceful ornaments on their person, were engaged with gold and silver-handled spades in their hands, in cleaning the flower-beds and superfluous grasses, and watering them in a spirit of general gaiety and hilarity,

singing the while in suppressed tones the sweet ballads of love, and setting creepers of flowers and vines in their proper places. Along the banks of the streamlets flowing around the parterres stood herons, cranes, Brahmini ducks, and other water-fowls in rows. The branches of the big trees were covered with embroidered stuffs, and on the front of each terrace was a cistern full of rose and other sweet-scented waters. Within these terraces were fountains representing nightingales, doves, and turtle-doves, which were made of jewels. In these fountains gurgled silver and gold water, and when it burst forth in a thousand jets and streams from the plumes and wings of the birds, it gave an enchanting feature to the scene, and refreshed and cooled the eyes of the spectators.

In the middle of the garden was a turquois Bungalow, which was unrivalled in beauty and elegance. It had sun-shades around it, which were made of a mixture of silver and gold. Over the doors of the Bungalow, screens of gold and silver texture were drawn; while brocade curtains fastened to rings of ruby, were hanging down by ropes interwoven with gold thread. On the front of the principal gateway leading to the Bungalow, there was a platform made of seven lacs of gold-mohurs, and within this Bungalow, was placed a throne richly laden with precious jewels.

Passing over this platform, the king entered the Bungalow and seated himself on the throne. Presents were laid before him, and the minister considered himself infinitely honoured by the king's presence. The king on the other hand was very much pleased with the enchanting beauty of the garden, and considered the scenery of his own garden "Bagdad" to be fading before the charming appearance of his minister's garden "Bag Bedad."

This garden, said the king, was by no means inferior in beauty to the traditional garden of the king Shaddad, and he was very much pleased with it, for the roads were clean, the parterres well-shaped, the fruits delicious, the flowers the choicest, the trees straight and elegant, and the cisterns capacious and well-designed.

* Overjoyed with the king's praise, Alkash said. "My Lord all these embellishments were on your account: it was impossible for your humble slave to come by them: Your Majesty's presence here has not only done my humble-self a considerable honor, but it has virtually raised me to an enviable distinction among my own equals."

The king then partook of dinner, after which Alkash summoned the bands of musicians and some charming damsels to divert him with their sweet chants. Crystal goblets of wine were then circulated and fireworks let off. The rejoicings continued for twenty one days and nights. On the twenty-second day, Alkash was invested with robes, after which the king rode back to his palace well pleased with all that he had seen.



CHAPTER V.

ARREST OF BUZURCHEMEHAR BY ALKASH, AND HIS ESCAPE FROM THE MINISTER'S CLUTCHES. THE KING'S DREAM AND HIS ANXIETY FOR ITS INTERPRETATION.

TO resume the thread of the story. Buzurchemehar who was discreet, sensible and sagacious, having betaken himself to seclusion, used to spend his time entirely in devotion to the Almighty. On a certain day, his mother expressed her irresistible inclination to eat some pot-herbs, and asked her son to procure them for her, if possible. Buzurchemehar, who was devotedly attached to his mother, accepted her request with joy. He proceeded to Bag Bedad, but on arriving at the garden, found its entrance gate closed. He thereupon called out the gardener, who immediately answered the call and approaching the gate intended to open the padlock, when Buzurchemehar prevented him from touching it, and said, "beware of the female serpent that clings to the padlock to bite you, and avenge the death of her pair, which you killed yesterday." When he looked attentively at the padlock, he realised the truth to his dismay, and killing the serpent instantly opened the gate and threw himself at the feet of Buzurchemehar, as the saviour of his life. "What command have you to make?" asked the gardener of Buzurchemehar in all earnestness. "I am in need of some potherbs," replied Buzurchemehar courteously, "for which I shall pay you the price." "The potherbs are at your disposal," said the gardener, "but I will accept" no price from a man to whom I am so much indebted." So saying, the gardener proceeded to fetch the potherbs, when finding a goat grazing among the saffron, he struck her with a mallet that killed her then and there. "Tyrant!" cried out Buzurchemehar. "What have you done to the goat? Instead of killing one, you have taken the lives of three." The gardener smiled at his remonstrance and said, "What has made you speak so my boy? How do you say three lives taken, when only one goat has been killed?" "Fool that you are," responded Buzurchemehar, "Don't you see that the goat has two young ones in her bosom of such and such a color, that have died with her."

While they were thus bandying words, Alkash, who was listening from his sitting-place, sent for the gardener

and enquired of him what the talk was about. He related to him all that had passed. Alkash had the bosom of the goat torn open and to his great astonishment found in it two young ones of the same color as described by Buzurchemehar. He therefore sent for Buzurchemehar and having made him sit by his side, asked him who he was, what his father's name was and where he lived. "I am the son of Khajah Bakhtjamal and the grandson of a physician," replied Buzurchemehar, "I have been overtaken by heavenly calamities. My father has fallen victim to a certain tyrant and I am meditating how to avenge his death. I have taken to a life of seclusion for some time to undergo the bitter pangs of my affliction with calm forbearance. I spend my time in praying to God, but my mind is a constant prey to grief, on account of the death of my innocent father." "Have you then found out your father's murderer?" asked Alkash. "God is the supreme avenger," replied Buzurchemehar, "nothing is difficult with Him: some day or other, the murderer will be discovered and the innocent blood of the victim fully avenged." "Can you say," asked Alkash, "what occurred in my mind last night." You intended to speak to your wife," said Buzurchemehar, "about the hidden treasure, which you have taken possession of so gratuitously, but some thing prevented your communicating the secret to her."

Alkash shuddered at what he heard from Buzurchemehar and began trembling with fear. It is not unlikely, reflected he in his mind, that some day or other the secret will be disclosed and my whole wealth and effects pass into the hands of this boy, who appears to possess so keen a foresight. He therefore meditated on murdering him and eating up his liver and heart, which he thought would serve to sharpen his intellects, and remove from his path, the evil that looked so threatening to him. Taking this resolve, Alkash immediately whispered to his negro slave, Bukhtear; "If you can kill this boy and make me eat the roast of his liver and heart, I will put you in possession of the object you have in view." Following the hint of his master, the negro slave dragged Buzurchemehar into a dark closet, and was about to knock him down and run his knife across his neck, when Buzurchemehar laughed merrily and thus spoke—"The hopes, which have induced you to take my life, will not be realised at the hands of your ungrateful master. You will not only be deceived by him, but lose your present position and honour; while on the other hand, if you release me, I assure you, I shall be the means of

procuring you the wishes of your heart, which you cling to so fondly." "What are my wishes?" asked the slave. "If you can tell what they are, I promise, I will set you free at once." "You are enamoured of the daughter of your master," responded Buzurchemehar, "but he will not offer her hand to you on any account; while I pledge my words that I will marry her to you, and even undertake the celebration of your wedding in a befitting manner. On the tenth day hence, the King shall have a dream, which he will forget and ask his ministers to interpret. When all will fail and the king will be exasperated with rage, your master will then order you to bring me up to him, but I warn you not to give him a clue to my whereabouts, unless you receive three sound slaps from his hands. I warn you again to preserve all that I have said in perfect secrecy."

"My master, has ordered me," said the negro slave, "to procure him the roast of your liver and heart. If I roast for him the liver and heart of any animal, he is sure to detect them, being a physician, and I shall then be punished." "At the gate of this city," replied Buzurchemehar, "there is a kid, which has been nourished with human milk. It belongs to an old woman, who will sell it. Take the price, here it is, purchase the kid from her, and slaughter it for your master to make him eat its liver and heart. You are at liberty to take the flesh for your own use."

Terrified by the wrath of Providence, as well as, tempted by the longings of his heart, the negro slave acted up to the wishes of Buzurchemehar and gave up his idea of murdering him. Having eaten the roast, Alkash chuckled at the idea of his having become an accomplished man with an enlightened mind; while Buzurchemehar returning home, safe and sound, related his adventures to his mother, who wept most bitterly at first, partly for the calamities that had befallen her helpless son, and partly for the departed soul of her affectionate husband; she then returned thanks to the Almighty for the safe return of her son. "I conjure you, my son," said she to Buzurchemehar, "not to step out of your house, but to keep yourself confined at home, contented with what Providence condescends to give us till the close of the day. Your enemy is in wait, and we cannot divine, when calamity may overtake you." "Don't you be anxious for it, my mother," said Buzurchemehar. "if God grants, you will see what turns out shortly, and how the will of God eventually triumphs over every difficulty."

On the tenth day, the king had a dream, which he forgot altogether. In the morning, he spoke to his ministers and courtiers. "I had a dream last night, but I cannot remember it now, despite all my efforts. I therefore ask you to expound and interpret it to me, and merit suitable reward for it." "If the dream were known to us," replied they, "we could of course give Your Majesty some interpretation of it to the extent of our genius and intelligence." "The philosophers during the days of Alexander the Great," said the king, "used to recite, and interpret to him any dream, which he happened to forget in the morning. The positions I have honored you with, and the kind treatment, which you have always received at my hands, are for such services. Should you fail, remember that each of you will not only be subjected to a capital punishment, but your wives and children will be squeezed in mills and your houses given up to plunder. As a matter of indulgence, I allow you forty days time, and if even then you fail to expound the dream consistent with my wishes, I tell you the consequence will be the worst." Alkash, who was more exalted in position than the rest, was the more pressed by the king to interpret the dream.

While all the viziers, nobles and philosophers were in a dilemma how to interpret the dream without knowing it first, and how to evade the unexpected calamity, Alkash spoke out. "My lord! from the science of geomancy, I have been able to ascertain that Your Majesty had dreamt that a cock descending from the heaven had thrown Your Majesty into a river of fire. This dream was frightful enough to startle you from slumber, but you forgot it the next moment."

The king was annoyed at the misrepresentation of his minister and ejaculated. "Contemptible wretch! Dare you deceive me in my face by a nice petty trick, and do you again pretend to be a wise and talented philosopher, as well as, a distinguished geomancer. I have never dreamt what you pretend to say. I allow you two days time more and if you still fail, I swear by the fire-temple of Nimrod, which I adore, that I will order you to be buried alive, before any one else is doomed to punishment."

Hearing this, Alkash returned home quite bewildered, and at once inquired of his negro slave as to the whereabouts of Buzurchemehar. "Where is that boy?" asked Alkash from the slave. "Speak to me truly if you have killed him or let him go alive?" "I have already killed him, My Lord, in accordance

with Your Lordship's wishes," responded the slave. "Why then is he inquired after now?" "I have reasons to believe," replied Alkash, "that the boy being prudent and intelligent enough must have effected his rescue from your hands." "The fear of incurring my displeasure alone prevents your giving out the truth, but I swear solemnly by the name of * *Lat* and *Manat* that I will not make you amenable for it; nay, I will reward you handsomely, if you will let me know his whereabouts, thereby saving my life, as well as, of several others, who have fallen into trouble."

The slave still repeated what he had stated before, whereupon Alkash gave him three sound slaps, which caused his ear drums to burst and the blood to ooze out of them. Bukhtear fell to the ground senseless, and when he came to consciousness, he made entreaties to the minister not to beat him again and said he would bring the boy. "Fool that you are, why did you not speak the truth when I insisted on you to do so." "The boy had warned me," said the negro slave, not to give you any clue of him, unless I received three sound slaps from your hands, and this was the reason why I hesitated in speaking the truth." Alkash hugged him to his breast and said. "Go and bring the boy immediately to me and I will reward you handsomely both with cash and jewels."

Bukhtear repaired to the house of Buzurchemehar and rapped at his door. The latter answered the call and after ascertaining the fact from the slave, accompanied him to the residence of Alkash, who received him courteously and proceeded as follows after apologizing for his past misdeed "My dear boy, the king had a dream, but he has forgotten it altogether. He is very anxious for its revelation, and says if we do not interpret it to him correctly, he will kill us one by one; you alone, I see, are blessed with the gift of unravelling unknown things, and if you will kindly expound the king's dream, you will not only save our lives, but protect our children from the impending calamity." "I cannot explain it here," said "Buzurchemehar," but I advise you to represent to the king next morning that you have been hitherto testing the qualifications of his vizier, courtiers and philosophers in order to ascertain if they are at all skilled in discovering mysteries, but as they have now totally failed, you wish to bring before him one of your disciples, who will explain his dream in detail. When the king will send for me, I shall appear before him and expound and interpret to him his dream most faithfully. This will not only save your life, as well as of others, but raise you to distinction."

* Deities of the fire-worshippers,

CHAPTER VI.

Revelation of the dream to the king by Buzurchemehar and the execution of Alkash for the murder of his father.

THE next morning Alkash appeared before the king, and spoke to him as instructed by Buzurchemehar. No sooner did the minister finish his words, than the king ordered Buzurchemehar to be brought before him. A Chobdar (mace-bearer) was instantly deputed and Buzurchemehar was asked to attend the king's Court. "What conveyance have you brought for me," asked he of the Chobdar, "if you want me to take to His Majesty." "I have brought no conveyance," said the bearer, "as I had no orders for it, but I will just go back and soon return with it." So saying, he returned to the king and represented to him the wishes of Buzurchemehar. The king ordered him to take a steed, but when this was done, Buzurchemehar declined to ride on it. "The horse," said he, "has been created out of air, while I have been made of earth. As air and earth are antagonistic to each other, I cannot use such an animal." The Chobdar went back again and represented to the king precisely what he had heard from Buzurchemehar, when His Majesty ordered all the conveyances to be taken over to him, so that he might select any he wanted.

In pursuance of the king's order all sorts of conveyances were got ready and taken over to Buzurchemehar, who still declined to accept of any of them and said. "I cannot ride on an elephant, for it is especially a king's conveyance and it will be a piece of gross disrespect on my part, if I were to ride on its back. The Palanquin, or litter, is especially fitted for patients. I am not one of them, nor am I a dead man to be carried by four bearers. The camel is gifted with an angelic nature, and I cannot dare ride on its back. The mule is an illegitimate offspring of the horse, while I being of legitimate birth, it is impossible for me to use such an animal. The bullocks are used by grocers and washermen and as I am of neither class, but of respectable parentage and blessed with

talent and genius, I do not feel inclined to accept such a conveyance for myself. The ass is intended for condemned criminals. I am, however, an innocent man, and a common subject of the crown, and it is therefore utterly unsuited to me.

With these excuses Buzurchemehar returned all the conveyances sent to him, and asked the bearer to relate to the king verbatim what he had said. The conveyances were therefore taken back, when the king directed the bearer to ask him again what other conveyance he wanted. On being asked, Buzurchemehar stated that if the king was at all desirous of having his dream interpreted, he had better send to him Alkash, his vizier, properly saddled and bridled that he might appear before His Majesty on his back and give him a faithful interpretation of his dream. The nobles and courtiers were astonished at the liberty taken by Buzurchemehar and thus whispered to each other, "It is curious that this man disregards the king's call. Instead of considering himself infinitely honored, he delays in appearing before His Majesty. He must either be a man of sublime heart, or a downright maniac."

The king, however, burst into a fit of laughter at the nature of the conveyance required and ordered Alkash to be saddled and bridled at once and taken to Buzurchemehar. The orders were immediately carried out and Buzurchemehar riding on his back proceeded to His Majesty amidst a throng of motley spectators, kicking him frequently with his heels and repeating at every step "Thanks to heaven. I have at last succeeded in catching hold of my father's murderer this day." When Buzurchemehar arrived in the King's presence, he was received by him with due respect and courtesy. "Tell me first," asked the king, "what made you treat my minister so ignominiously." "First of all," answered Buzurchemehar, "this fellow is a traitor. He has robbed your Majesty of an immense fortune without the least fear of incurring your Majesty's wrath. Secondly, he has committed a heinous crime in having killed my innocent father, who had trained him in the science of geomancy with the tender feeling of a father, and reposed so much confidence in him that he kept nothing secret from him, or in other words, he made a clean breast to him of the circumstance, which brought him in contact with seven heaps of treasure deposited by the King Shaddad. Instead of appropriating it himself he pointed it out to Alkash under a feeling of mutual friendship, but this ungrateful wretch overpowered by a suspicion lest my father should give out the secret resulting

in the loss of his ill-gotten fortune, which might pass into the King's hands, betook himself to the dastardly act of killing him on the spot. His remains are still lying in the cellar, where the treasure was buried, without a coffin and a grave, partly covered with stones and partly exposed. I therefore beseech your Majesty's impartial justice in this case. I will be clamorous before God, if no redress is afforded to me in this world and then your Majesty will be called upon to account for withholding justice from one oppressed in your Majesty's dominion."

On hearing this account, the king cast his angry looks at Alkash and said. "Do you hear what this boy says? What harm had his father done to you that you were impelled to take his life so mercilessly, forgetting all his rights as your tutor? I marvel that the fear of God produced no effect in your unclean heart, nor did you even shudder at the idea of your atrocious deed being once avenged. It is a pity that the poor fellow should have met his doom at your hands in such a manner as a recompense for the good treatment you had received at his hands. Had he not trained you in the science of geomancy, and taken you to the seven heaps of hidden treasure, which God placed in his way, he would not have been deprived of his dear life; but it is time for you to see how your atrocities are amply recompensed, and how you find your way straight to perdition. I should indeed be very much wanting in a sense of justice, were I to tolerate such a nefarious crime. "My lord," said Alkash "all that has been represented by Buzurchemehar is false." "Truth has no difficulty in asserting itself," replied Buzurchemehar. "Let people accompany me and I shall prove my statement."

With his courtiers, nobles and Buzurchemehar, the king proceeded to the place where the Khaja lay buried. Alkash was ordered to be chained, and dragged to the place like a prisoner. The whole city was in bustle and commotion. People ran to behold the miscreant in chains; some shuddered at the wrath of the Almighty; some cursed him outright for having murdered his benefactor; some repeated that vice is recompensed by vice; some drew lessons from it; while others felt astounded at his effrontery in having committed so foul a deed.

In short, the king with a crowd of spectators and his retinue reached the gate of "Bag Bedad." When he entered the garden, Buzurchemehar led him to the cellar. The truth was realized. The king was astonished at the seven heaps of trea-

sure deposited there. On one side of it lay the dry corpse of Khaja Bhukt Jamal, a victim to the most inhuman tyranny; while on the other, was found his horse lying dead with his flesh and bones all decomposed. The king was transported with joy at the sight of the inexhaustible wealth, and ordered it to be removed at once to his treasury, and kept under proper security.

The remains of the Khaja were then taken out of the cellar and his funeral celebrated with pomp after the custom of the country. Buzurchemehar was allowed to spend forty days in mourning. He returned home loaded with an immense fortune, which the king was pleased to offer him out of his treasury.

Returning to his mother, Buzurchemehar placed before her all the wealth he had received from the king, and after relating to her all that had come to pass, engaged himself in the performance of the ceremony enjoined on the fortieth day of the burial. Food was distributed in abundance to friends and relatives, as well as, to the poor. This being done, Buzurchemehar returned to the king's court and was invested with robes. He was then ordered to attend the court daily and he followed the king's orders most faithfully.

One day he availed himself of the opportunity of asking the king's permission to interpret to him his dream. On getting his order, he proceeded as follows. "The dream, which has so much puzzled Your Majesty, was that Your Majesty saw some four dishes of various viands arranged before you on a dinner-cloth. Your Majesty intended to take a morsel out of the pudding (*hulwa*), when a black dog darted forth and snatched it away from Your Majesty's hand. On this, Your Majesty was startled from slumber, but forgot the dream." "I swear by the fire-temple of Nimrod," said the king, "that this was the dream I had. Have it therefore interpreted to me forthwith, that I may be relieved from the anxiety that troubles me." "Pray take me inside the house, My lord," requested Buzurchemehar, "and let all the females of your harem, gather in one place. I shall then be able to give your Majesty a true interpretation of the dream."

The king entered the *seraglio* with Buzurchemehar, and all the females of the harem were called to one place. Among these was a lady of transcendent beauty, who following the others arrived with her attendants in all her feminine gaiety,

gorgeously attired and richly laden with jewels. Among these attendants, was a negro slave dressed in female garb. No sooner did they arrive, than Buzurchemehar caught hold of the negro's hand and having pointed him out to the king spoke, "This was the black dog, my lord, which had snatched away from Your Majestys' hand the morsel in the dream and the morsel so snatched was this lady, who had been unfaithful to Your Majesty all along for the sake of this slave".

The king was horror-stricken at the revelation. On inquiry it appeared that this negro slave was no other than a male slave, who having kept himself in the harem, cloaked in female garb, had been spending his time with the lady in luxury. The king was frantic with rage and ordered the negro slave to be torn to pieces and devoured by dogs; while the lady was ordered to be bricked up in a minaret on a public place, after having been sent round the city on the back of an ass. Buzurchemehar was then invested with robes; while Alkash was ordered to be half bricked up out of the city gate and made a butt for arrows before a crowd of spectators.

This done, all the effects and fortune belonging to the deceased minister were made over to Buzurchemehar, who after making the usual offering to the king, took leave of him and repairing straight to the house of Alkash with Bukhtear, the negro slave spoke to his widow, as follows. "I had promised Bukhtear to marry him with your daughter after avenging the death of my father. Pray therefore comply with his wishes now, and I pledge my word that if a son be born to your daughter, I shall train him myself, and when he is old enough, he shall be made a minister in the place of his deceased father." "I have no objection," replied the widow, "to carry out your orders; you are at liberty to do whatever you like, and I shall be glad to abide by your wishes." The daughter of Alkash was accordingly married to the negro slave.

When the king was informed of Buzurchemehar's generosity towards the family of his deceased minister, he admired the magnanimity of his heart. A few days afterwards, when his courtiers, nobles, and princes had assembled, he extolled the merits of Buzurchemehar in the following terms "Buzurchemehar" said the king, "is doubtless a man of magnanimous heart, and of a high and respectable parentage, for he is the son of Khaja Bukht Jamal and the grandson of Hakim Jamas. In talent and genius, he has no equal; while in integrity of purpose and self-denial there are but few to vie with

him. Instead of taking any thing out of the wealth of Alkash, which I had bestowed on him, he has left all to his widow to enjoy. He is not only profound in his scientific and literary attainments, but he is also an adept in political, financial and administrative matters. His liberality, leniency and sublimity of heart are the undeniable characteristics of his nature ; while on the other hand, he is a sincere, straight forward and eloquent man of his age. Above all, he is a distinguished geomancer, and has surpassed all my preceeding ministers in this art. I have therefore a desire to make him my vizier, feeling confident that he is a person fit to grace my court." " Nothing will be more desireable than what your Majesty has been pleased to suggest" spoke the courtiers, " and it will really be an honor to the court, if a man like Buzurchemehar is allowed to occupy the seat of a minister."

Buzurchemehar was accordingly invested with the ministers robes, and ordered to take his seat on the King's right hand. The court being over, Buzurchemehar returned home in all the magnificence befitting his rank, and his mother prostrated herself to return thanks to the Almighty on beholding her son clothed with such dignity. Buzurchemehar then directed his attention to the administration of the Kingdom.



CHAPTER. VII.

EXPULSION OF DILARAM, THE KING'S MISTRESS, AND HER RE-ADMISSION INTO THE HAREM.

THE infamous conduct of the deceased lady of the harem was sufficient to shake the king's confidence in all women entirely. Save and except Dilaram, who besides being a captivating and chaste beauty was a charming minstrel, no other ladies could find favor with the king, and if ever any of them was accidentally thrown in his way, she was exposed to his wrath.

On a certain day the king appointed a hunting match and proceeded out of the town with a number of birds of prey and hunting animals. A little way from the town, there was a steep hill commanding a beautiful landscape. It was overhung with a variety of sweetscented flowers, creepers, and trees, which gave a picturesque appearance to the place. At the foot of the hill was an extensive and delightful spot for hunting, abounding in delicious flowers and abundance of game. It was covered with soft verdant grass for miles, which with its numerous water-courses, canals, streamlets and silvery fountains afforded a ravishing beauty to the place. On one side of it flowed a gorgeous river, the watery expanse of which was bordered with green paddy-fields, the beauty of which was greatly enhanced by water-lilies growing in abundance.

Pleased with the charming scenery of the place, the king alighted on the river bank. All on a sudden he caught a glimpse of an old man coming from the side of the forest with a bundle of firewood on his head. He was well stricken in years and his infirmity made him stagger at every step under the pressure of his load. Compassionating his condition, the king asked his attendants to ascertain who he was and where he lived. On enquiry it appeared that his name was Kobad, which was the king's own name. The king was greatly astonished at the curious similarity of the names and asked Buzurchemehar to explain from the science of geomancy why in spite of a singular coincidence of names, he was a monarch, and this old man a wretched wood-cutter.

After consulting the figures, Buzurchemehar stated—"The star of Your Majesty and this old man is one and the same, but at the time of Your Majesty's birth, the sun and the moon were

in conjunction in the sign of Aries, but when this wood-cutter was born, they had retreated within the influence of the ominous sign of Pisces." Dilaram, the king's mistress, ejaculated abruptly that she had no faith in all this; nor would she like to be guided by such credulities. "It is clear", said she, "that his wife being a saucy and ill-behaved woman, does not like him, because he is a simpleton and ill-formed, or else, he would not have come to such a plight and suffered such miseries".

The king, who was prejudiced against women in general, did not relish Dilaram talking at such a rate. "It is to be inferred from what Dilaram has ventured to say", said the king, "that all the fortune that God has bestowed on me and all my grandeur have been owing to the decency of her manners, and that they have come to my lot on her account only. Let her therefore be stripped at once of her dress before me and made over to this old man."

The king's order was instantly obeyed. Dilaram asked the wood-cutter to take her to his house. "It is the grace of God", said she to him, "that a woman of my worth has been granted to you. Return thanks to the Almighty, for the days of your troubles have come to an end. I tell you at the same time that you need not be anxious for my bread. I will make thousands eat before I eat myself, and be the means of obtaining for you a world-wide renown."

The wood-cutter was transported with joy and took Dilaram home with him. When he approached his house, his wife, who saw him coming with a beautiful young lady, ran towards him half-frantic with rage like that of a demon and thundered forth—"Old fellow! What has made you bring at this advanced age a co-wife to associate me with?" So saying, she gave him such a tremendous blow with both her hands that the poor man fell rolling to the ground. "Don't you be so cruel to this old man," said Dilaram to the woman, "I consider him no more than a father and yourself as my mother. I pray you therefore to receive me, as one of your children and offer me a morsel of bread from your own motherly hand. I shall not trouble you for bread; nay, I shall render you all possible service." These words of Dilaram excited sympathy in the heart of the woman, who was very much ashamed of what she had done. "My person and property are at your service," said she to Dilaram. "You should consider my house, as your own, and I shall be satisfied with what you will be pleased to give me."

It was the old man's practice to sell fire-wood in the market daily and return home in the evening with provisions, which he procured from the cost of the wood. He had several sons, all of whom were either blind, lame, crippled or lazy. They used to cling to him on his return, and snatch away the bread from his hand, and distribute it amongst themselves. This beggarly provision was scarcely sufficient to appease their hunger, so that, they lived frequently half-famished and in great distress.

Dilaram kept quiet at what she saw, but the next day being unable to restrain herself any longer, said to the old man. "Father! tomorrow when you go to sell your fire-wood, pray purchase some wheat from its cost. As for your usual bread try to get it by some other means." The wood-cutter acted accordingly, when Dilaram going over to a neighbour's house ground the wheat, and having cooked several cakes from it, fed all of them for three days. The whole family returned thanks to her and began to live in ease and comfort ever after. Dilaram purchased some wool from the pice the old man could spare during these days, and twisting ropes with it, asked him to sell them off in the market. This practice was followed by Dilaram for several days, until she could gradually save some money, with which she purchased an ass for the old man. She asked him to carry his bundle of fire-wood on its back for sale, saying that it would not only carry more load, but also relieve him from personal hard labour. Thus in the course of two years, she gradually provided the old man with four or five asses and slaves, the income derived from which was utilized in purchasing several other properties and houses. The condition of the wood-cutter was now changed. Fortune smiled on his face, and his whole family began to live in peace and prosperity. The old fellow himself was rejoiced at the change in his appearance.

When summer set in, Dilaram advised the wood-cutter not to take his fire-wood to market for sale at this time of the season, but collect them in some of the mountain caverns, that they might command a large sale during the winter and rainy seasons and ensure a large profit. The old man acted up to the advice of Dilaram, so that when winter folloyed the rainy season, there was a large demand for dry wood for baths &c., and the wood collected by him had a fair sale owing to the intensity of the cold, which the change of the season had brought in.

It so happened that the King took another shooting excursion to the same hill after a few years. On the second day of

his arrival, there was a snow-fall, which occasioned such severe cold that the atmosphere caused numbness and gnashing of the teeth. The whole of the King's army was benumbed and distracted from the shafts of chill, when suddenly people espied a heap of fire-wood in the mountain cavern. This fortuitous discovery gave them a new life. Disappointment was followed by hope and the people began to breathe more freely. The wood was ignited and thus the lives of many saved. The next morning the King returned to his palace with his retinue.

When the wood-cutter, as usual, went to bring the fire-wood for sale, he was surprised to find a heap of charcoal in its place. Tormented with grief at the loss of his fire-wood, the old man rent the air with his wailings. He sat down there heart-broken, and began weeping bitterly.

It was at this time that the man's fortune took a new leap. It is true that when fortune favors a man, his very touch turns the earth to pure gold. In the cavern, where the old man had stacked his wood, there was a mine of gold. The flames caused by the burning of the wood producing heat had made the gold melt and collect in one place. The old man began to scrape the charcoal. The stone had also been burnt along with the wood and in digging the same under the impression that they were so many pieces of charcoal, he came in contact with several large pieces of massive gold.

To show the charcoal to Dilaram the old man loaded them on the back of his asses, and took with him at the same time one or two bars of gold. Returning home, he placed them before her and began weeping most bitterly. After relating to her all that had happened, he added, that besides the charcoal, he had also brought with him several pieces of stones, which had burnt with the fire-wood, as he thought that these would remove her doubts and be serviceable for domestic purposes.

Prompted by curiosity, Dilaram scratched the burnt stone with the point of her knife, and was surprised to find it pure massive gold. Returning thanks to the heaven for this unexpected gift, she asked the old man to bring forthwith all the remaining pieces of the burnt stones on his asses. This was immediately done, when Dilaram wrote a letter in the name of a gold-smith called "Fysal" and placing it in the hand of the old man, said "Father, take this letter to Balsora with as many stones as can be loaded on your asses and hand it over,

after my compliment to the gold-smith named on the postscript, who is my brother as much as you are my father, and tell him that you have been sent by me as my agent. My epistle will answer the purpose. When he pays you gold-mohurs in exchange for the stones, bring them to me, but beware of falling among villains, thieves and robbers."

Having deputed Kobad towards Balsora, Dilaram caused the rest of the stones to be deposited under the ground. After this, she deputed a slave to a banker in Madyen, named Sohail, with instructions to tell him that owing to her having incurred the king's wrath, she had been passing a wretched life, but the time was not far distant, when she would be restored to his favor ; so the banker must start at once with architects, artisans, laborers, carpenters &c., and come over to her with them without fail, for she was anxious to have a building made for her through him on the model of the king's palace. The messenger was also instructed to make the banker understand that he must meet the expenses for the building from his own purse, which would be repaid to him soon in a lump sum.

On receiving this information, Sohail, who had great confidence in Dilaram's words, lost no time in starting with artisans and laborers and having come to her, said " Madam, I am in duty bound to obey your orders, much less have I any inclination to demand payment of any ready money. I only wish that you will not forget me, when fortune serves to bring you back to your former dignity." So saying, he laid the foundation of a splendid building, which with the help of skilful artisans and a host of laborers was erected in the course of a short time in all its grandeur and perfections. Dilaram then caused portraits of herself, and of the king to be painted all over the walls, doors and floors of the building, which was, moreover, adorned with innumerable designs and pictures made by skilful artists. In the course of a short time the house was richly furnished and tastefully decorated in every respect. Musketeers, lance-bearers, water-carriers, servants, wrestlers, jockeys and other retainers befitting a king's court were employed.

In the meantime Kobad returned from Balsora with gold-mohurs. Dilaram sent him to the bath-room. The poor wood-cutter was not accustomed to baths, so that when the bath servants intended to undress him, he was terrified at their acts and prostrating himself at their feet made abject entreaties not to expose him. " If I have done any harm to you," said he to the servants, " pray pardon me for it and do not make me stark

naked; nor be so unmerciful as to boil me in hot water." Finding him uninitiated in the preliminaries of a bath, the bath-servants laughed at the nature of his importunities and consoled him by saying, that he must not be afraid of any ill-treatment at their hands, inasmuch as, they would give him a comfortable bath, which would not only relieve him of the fatigues of his journey, but make his body light and elastic. With these assuring words, the servants gave him a piece of cloth to cover the lower part of his body with, but instead of doing this the poor old man wrapped it round his head. Thus the servants had great difficulty in giving him a suitable bath. When this was at last done, he was dressed with princely robes, and it was henceforward announced that he was to be called "Kobad, the merchant", instead of, "Kobab, the wood-cutter."

After four or five days, Dilaram sent him to pay a visit to Buzurchemehar with valuable and choice presents, and instructed him with the etiquettes of interview with nobles and ministers. Receiving notice of Kabad's arrival, Buzurchemehar allowed him to be admitted and embracing him affectionately paid due respect to his old age by courteous and polite treatment. As instructed by Dilaram, Kobad asked to be introduced to His Majesty the next morning and his wishes were cheerfully granted. 12,698

Taking leave of Buzurchemehar, Kobad returned home and related to Dilaram all that had passed between him and the minister. The next morning, she ascertained from Shohail what kind of dress the King had put on that day and dressing Kobad precisely in the same style, sent him to the King. Kobad first went over to the minister, who according to his promise conducted him to the King's court, but before taking him into his Majesty's presence, the minister asked him to stop in the vestibule, and then going over to the King, obtained his permission to introduce the intended visitor. The King accepted his minister's request, and Kobad was conducted into the king's presence :

Being a wood-cutter, the poor old fellow did not know the etiquette of the court. Before leaving home to visit the king, Dilaram had instructed him how to appear before His Majesty, but this poor simpleton forgetting her instructions at the sight of the King, made a sudden jump to approach him, and in so doing slipped against the marble pavement and fell to the ground on his hips. The King and his courtiers smiled, but no one dared breathe a word of censure out of respect to the Khajah

who had introduced the man himself. The King accepted his present, and, as a token of his kindness, offered him a piece of sugarcandy, which the old man swallowed after salutation. All present in the court were astonished at Kobad's apparent impertinence; while the Khaja was very much ashamed of his unmannerly conduct.

When the court broke up, Kobad returned home and related to Dilaram how he was offered the sugarcandy, and how he ate it on receiving it from the King. Dilaram was very much ashamed of what he had done, and said, "You have been guilty of a gross piece of impertinence in swallowing the sugarcandy in the King's presence. You should have rather placed the King's offer as a sacred gift over your head after salutation and offering presents to His Majesty, than eaten it so unceremoniously before him." Kobad then asked what he was to do next to avoid further disgrace, should he happen to go to the King again. "If any thing," said she, "is now offered to you by the King, place it over your head after salutation, and then offer presents if necessary."

The old man retained in his memory these words of Dilaram. The next day, when he went to the King's court, His Majesty was at dinner. He was ordered to be admitted, and when he appeared, His Majesty out of kindness for him, offered him a cup of meat, which he received after salutation and remembering the advice of Dilaram, upset the cup over his head, so that his moustaches, beard and clothes were besmeared with broth, that disfigured him almost to mocking ugliness. This fellow is very impertinent indeed," reflected the King in his mind, "for whatever he does, is nothing short of foolishness and he pretends to be a prominent merchant."

Fortunately Dilaram had instructed Kobad that day to ask the King through Buzurchemehar to accept his invitation. He did so, and the King, who had come to entertain a special liking for him on account of his unaffected simplicity, and his late ridiculous behaviour, accepted the invitation most cheerfully. Kobad returned home and informed Dilaram of the King's acceptance of his invitation. She then engaged herself in the preparation of a sumptuous entertainment.

CHAPTER VIII.

INVITATION OF THE KING BY KOBAD AND RESTORATION OF DILARAM TO HIS MAJESTY'S FAVOUR.

The next morning the King accompanied by Buzurchemehar, his nobles and courtiers, proceeded to the house of Kobad. When he approached the house, Kobad advanced to receive him, and offered him presents.

• Entering the house, the King saw his, and Dilaram's portraits painted on every wall, floor and door of the house, and recalling to mind her pleasant society, regretted her loss very much. The King admired the elegance of the mansion and spoke to Buzurchemehar, that every chamber, hall and approach to the house had been made precisely on the model of his palace. Saying this, he entered the *Barahdari* and seated himself on a sofa studded with precious jewels. The dancers and musicians were invited to amuse the king, until dinner was served. Variety of dishes were served up and Kobad, as advised by Dilaram, produced before the king an ewer and wash-hand basin of gold and silver and arranged some of the dishes with his own hands.

When the king had finished his repast, Dilaram dressing herself in elegant style, approached the screen in order to show a glare of her charms through it to the king. He succeeded in attracting the king's notice, who catching a glance of her beauty, asked Kobad who she was. "The lady behind the screen," said he, with his hands folded together, "is my daughter, to whom I owe all this grandeur, and all that you see here. There is no ceremony for your lordship. Your Majesty can go inside the house, that I may be honoured thereby and pay a visit to the lady, who is also anxious to see you."

At the request of Kobad, the king went into the house, and seeing the lady from a distance, doubted her identity with Dilaram. When he approached her, she paid her respects to him. The king was taken by surprise and asked her in a fit of emotion, if she was Dilaram, and if so, how she happened to be there. Dilaram threw herself at the king's feet, and burst into tears. The king was very much moved, and raising her head from the ground, clasped her to his breast, with many a kind and sympathizing word. "This is the very Kobad, the wood-cutter," said she, "at whose mercy I was thrown by your

An arcaded pavilion.

Majesty so ignominiously. Fortune has served to bring him to such a state, that he is now called the prince of merchants. He has been considered worthy of Your Majesty's deepest regard, and has been honored by Your Majesty becoming his guest."

The king was very much ashamed of his previous rashness, and taking his mistress by the hand took her to the summer house, and made her sit down by him on a sofa. Kobad was invested with rich robes, and honored with the title of "Malikuttujjar" or the prince of merchants.

Dilaram was desired by the king to play on the guitar. She acquitted herself so admirably that the courtiers were enraptured. The dancers, actors, and musicians regaled the king with their performances; while Kobad was invested with another set of robes. The court then broke up, and the king returned to his palace with Dilaram.

The implacable hatred, which the king had conceived towards women in general, was now removed. He began to perceive a liking for them. Shortly after, he married Mohtarim Bano, his uncle's daughter. In the course of a year she was found to be in the family way. Buzurchemehar was desired by the king to cast the nativity of the child on its birth. He accordingly placed before himself his astrolabe and dice, to watch the movements of the stars, and while he thus set himself in readiness to await the birth of the child, the prince was safely delivered of a beautiful son in an auspicious moment. The horoscope of the child having been cast, Buzurchemehar congratulated the king for the birth of a son, who, he said, would be a sovereign of the world, as well as, a wise and just monarch, reigning over seventy years with great pomp and pride, although he would remain often sad in consequence of the evil advice of one of his companions. So saying, the minister directed his attention to select a suitable name for the child, when two of the * *Ayars* appeared and reported to the king that the stream, of which his majesty used to drink water and which had dried up some years ago, had been blessed with water. The minister considering it a good omen, gave the boy the name of Nowshera-wan; while another tradition goes to say that when the prince was born, the king had in his hand a cup of scarlet wine. Buzurchemehar spoke to the king in Persian. *Jam ra nosh o*

* The term *Ayar* is used in Arabic for such persons as are gifted with the genius of playing tricks to serve the purpose of their master. Such persons were generally attached to the king's court in olden times.

rawan furmaend. "Drink the wine, and circulate the cup." This pleased the king infinitely, and the boy was given the name of *Nowsherawan*.

Salutes of guns were made to demonstrate the felicity of the occasion. The hautboys, kettle-drums and clarions resounded in the air, and there was public rejoicing all over the king's dominions. Congratulations were poured forth from all quarters and presents received in abundance. The king's treasury was opened, his unbounded liberality enriched the poor, and removed the misery of his subjects. A year's revenue was remitted, so that one and all looked gay and cheerful on this happy occasion. On the eleventh day of the rejoicings, the king was informed of the birth of a son to the daughter of his deceased minister Alkash. No sooner did he hear the news, than he directed Buzurchemehar to kill the boy at once. "This boy," said he, "will turn out a deadly enemy to you, and will doubtless on getting an opportunity avenge the blood of his grandfather. It is against the dictates of wisdom to kill the serpent and foster its young ones. This is a maxim, which ought to be strictly followed; or else you are at liberty to exercise your own discretion in this matter." "No religion, My lord, will allow of punishing a man before his committing a crime," replied Buzurchemehar. "It is by no means desirable to kill an infant, who is innocent." "In my opinion," said the king, "it is advisable to remove the pain-giver before it gives the pain, for if you allow this root of evil to vegetate now, I warn you it will prove obnoxious to you hereafter." Buzurchemehar pleaded for the boy and finally succeeded in changing the king's mind. He then took leave of the king and going to the house of Alkash, gave the son of Bukhtear, the name of Bukhtuk.

When Nowsherawan was four years and four month's old, he was committed to the charge of Buzurchemehar for instruction. After a week Buzurchemehar caused presents to be made to the king by Bukhtuk, and assignments of the deceased minister to be made in his name.

He then began instructing him along with Nowsherawan with tender affection. In the course of a few years, Nowsherawan, who was naturally intelligent, became an accomplished scholar in moral and intellectual learning, and at the same time did not forget his field exercises.

On a certain day some merchants from China came to the town. They offered presents to the king and obtained His Majesty's permission for offering presents to the prince. On

appearing before the prince, the merchants made presents to him of the choicest and most precious articles they had brought with them. The prince inquired about the king of China, when the merchants gave him a faithful account of their monarch and added, "The king of China has a daughter, whose enchanting beauty has obtained renown far and wide. She has already attracted the notice of many princes, who are doting on her."

The story of the princess's beauty kindled the flame of love in the unsophisticated heart of Nawsherawan. He became a prey to her charms and sank gradually into a state of listless infatuation. The uneasiness of the prince became uncontrollable. He lost all patience and in the disquiet of his heart, spent his sleepless nights in tormenting reveries. His passion for the princess became irresistible, and there was nothing to solace his heart. He withdrew himself from all sorts of gaiety and sat for hours together in a listless mood picturing to himself the delicate figure of his beloved princess. Although the prince exerted his best to suppress the emotion of his heart, yet the failing state of his health, his pale countenance, and his ashy lips were sufficient to betray what passed in the recesses of his heart. At last the fact of the prince's uneasiness was brought to the notice of the king, who was very nigh bewildered at the unhappy news and spoke to Buzurchemehar about it. Having consoled the king, the minister repaired to the prince forthwith and after seeking privacy with him, asked him in all his wonted tenderness to speak out frankly what afflicted his heart. "Khajah," replied Nawsherawan, "first of all you are my father's minister and then again my teacher. For these reasons, I respect you as my superior. Although I should be ashamed of my present state of mind, which is hardly capable of being expressed in words, yet I cannot conceal it from you. I have been smitten with the charms of the daughter of the king of China, and I assure you that my life depends on her acquisition only."

Khajah asked the prince to take courage, and said, "It is no difficult task, my prince, for which you should give way to so much grief. Shake off your lethargy, take your repast, and make yourself easy. There is nothing to be gained by self-sacrifice. You are yet too young to be pushed to such an extremity. The beauties of the world would themselves be ready to sacrifice their hearts to you, and many powerful monarchs would be pleased to unite the hands of their daughters with yours. Pray therefore compose yourself. This is no tedious task to embark upon. I would myself undertake the execution of this

mission, and bring home to you the object of your fond desires. These conciliatory assurances of the Khajah were sufficient to buoy up the drooping spirits of the prince. Inspired with hopes he got up from bed and sought his bathroom. After taking a bath, he changed his garments, and then took his meal with his friends and companions.

Taking leave of the prince, Buzurchemehar returned to the king and related to him the story of the prince's love. "Khajah!" replied the king, "this is an expedition, which can only be successfully undertaken by you. In these matters, your advice is sound and salutary, and I must abide by it. The king of China is a big and powerful monarch, with extensive dominions under his sway. The work of contracting a mutual alliance must be very delicately taken in hand. In this matter a wise and respectable mission should be sent, and I do not see any, but you, to undertake this responsible duty. Would you therefore start for China at once and settle the proposed alliance in the manner your wisdom may dictate?" The Khajah obeyed the king and started for China with a force of fifty thousand horse and foot soldiers.

As regards Bukhtuk, it is related, that when, on his coming, to age, he became aware of the cause of his grandfather's death, he used to speak to his mother every now and again in the following terms. "Mother, whenever I happened to look at the face of Buzurchemehar, I could not suppress my aversion of him, and the blood would curdle in my veins at the sight of him. I will not be at rest, till I have avenged the blood of my deceased ancestor. I only seek an opportunity, and whenever I get it, I will not let it slip." Thus it was Bukhtuk's habit to talk against Buzurchemehar behind his back, but all his insinuations were met with censures by the king, who always reminded him of the kind treatment he received at the hands of the minister.

CHAPTER IX.

BUZURCHEMEHAR'S MISSION TO CHINA; HIS RETURN THERE- FROM WITH MULKA MEHER ANGEZ AND HER MARRIAGE WITH NOWSHERAWAN.

WHEN Buzurchemehar arrived within the dominion of the king of China in all the pomp and pride of his rank after a long and tiresome journey, the messengers reported to the king that the minister of the great sovereign Kobad Kamran had come to the city on some errand. On receiving the information, the king lost no time in deputing his nobles and courtiers to receive the minister with due courtesy, and when he was reported to be near the town, the king ordered his sons, and several princes, who were present there, to go out and meet him. On being conducted to the king's court, Buzurchemehar saluted him with profound respect, and after conveying to him his sovereign's compliments, made presents of precious jewels, horses, elephants, arms and other valuable articles. The king of China was mightily pleased with the minister's gentle and affable manners, and invested him with robes, lavishing on him at the same time immense fortune and valuable gifts. It is said that during the first interview with the king the Khajah was invested with robes eleven times, and raised to great distinction, the reason being that the king was so much pleased with his suitable replies, he received from the minister, every time he spoke to him, that he invested him with robes as many times, as he received such replies.

At last the Khajah was asked about the nature of his mission, which he represented in such a befitting manner that the king of China felt no hesitation in giving his free consent to the proposed alliance. He spoke out with an air of pride in open court that he had found for his son-in-law a prince like Nowsherawan, and instantly ordered arrangements to be made with all possible despatch for a journey to Madayen. No sooner was the order passed than every thing requisite for the proposed journey was ready. The king ordered two of his sons, Kababeh Cheenee and Kolabeh Cheenee, to accompany the bride with forty thousand Turks and gave her as dowry several boxes of

jewelleries, suits of valuable textures and other precious articles, as well as, several hundred female slaves of various regions.

In the course of a few months, Khajah reached close to Persia with the bride and his attendants. He stopped at a short distance from that country to spend the night. In the morning the troops were arrayed and marshalled under their leaders, and the Chinese princes proceeded towards the city of Madayen, with all the grandeur and paraphernalias of a royal wedding. The citizens flocked in numbers to witness the procession and when the king was informed, he advanced with Nowsherawan to receive them. Showers of jewels and treasure were poured upon the bride's litter, so much so, that the poor were enriched. The Khajah was embraced with tender affection and invested with robes of various descriptions. Nuptial arrangements were then made and Nowsherawan was married in an auspicious moment, the rejoicings lasting for full one year. After this, the king having seated Nowsherawan on the throne, betook himself to seclusion, advising his son to follow strictly the advice of Buzurchemehar in all his business concerns and to avoid making Bukhtuk the administrator of his affairs, whose evil influence, he said, was likely to endanger the safety of the kingdom.

Before placing Nowsherawan on the throne, the king sought the advice of Buzurchemehar in the matter. The latter advised him not to offer the crown to the prince for forty days, after which, he was at liberty to make him a bequest of his kingdom and throne. He added that he would like the prince to be placed for these few days under his exclusive control, and that he must be at liberty to do any thing he liked with him without interference from any body. The king acceded to his minister's request, and allowed him the privilege of exercising sole control over the prince for forty days, before his accession to the throne.

On this, the Khajah immediately ordered the prince to be fettered and sent to prison. After forty days, he was set free, but to make him reach the palace, the Khajah made him run breathless along with his steed. After this, he gave him three severe lashes, that made him writhe in extreme agony. The heat of the sun, coupled with the chastisement the prince was subjected to in having had to run a long way with the minister's steed over a sandy tract of land was tormenting in the extreme that he wept aloud. The minister then placed his

drawn sword in the hand of the prince, and lowering down his head with calm forbearance, asked him to cut it off as a punishment for his gross impertinence. Nowsherawan clasped him fervently to his neck and said. "Khajah, your acts are surely for some good, else you would never have subjected me to so much affliction, risking your own life in the business.

The king died after two years. Bukhtuk did not fail to exert his evil influence over Nowsherawan. By and by he led him on to persecute people, so that he was known to be a tyrant far and wide. At such a time of the king's unpopularity a notorious robber, who was known to be the chief of a gang of villains, and who had already overawed the people by his numerous deeds of blood, was arrested on a charge of burglary. Nowsherawan ordered him to be beheaded, and while he was being taken by the executioner, he addressed the king thus: "Sire the sentence of death has already been passed on me, and I cannot but submit to it with patience, but if your Majesty condescends to grant me forty days' time for the different enjoyments of life, I promise on the expiry of that term to communicate a secret, which I have learnt from my own teacher, to whom-ever your Majesty will be pleased to order. "What is that secret knowledge you are in possession of?" asked Nowsherawan. "Is it really of some avail?" "I can understand," replied the robber, "the languages of the animals, especially those of the birds, a rare gift, which I believe, none in your Majesty's court may have been blessed with."

Nowsherawan accepted the robber's request and committed him to the charge of Buzurchemehar, who gave him a comfortable house to live in and provided him with every means of enjoyment. For forty days, he gave himself up to untrained revelries. After this, Buzurchemehar reminded him of his promise of imparting a knowledge of the languages of animals. "I am devoid of all knowledge of the world," replied the robber. "I am an illiterate man all round. I had a mind to regale myself somehow, and have at last succeeded in my wishes by following such a stratagem. You are now at liberty to deal with me in any way you like." The Khaja burst into a fit of laughter at his words, and set him free after extracting an oath from him against leading a life of depredation.

Once on a time, as the king was out on a shooting excursion he lost his way and took a wrong direction. He was accompanied by no one but Buzurchemehar and Bukhtuk. In a certain place, he saw two owls seated on a tree, engaged in conversation.

Inspired by curiosity, the king asked Buzurchemehar what they were talking about. "They are discoursing," said he about their children's marriage. The father of the bridegroom speaks to the father of the bride that if he agrees to give three deserts as dowery to his daughter, he will accept the alliance. The latter states in reply that if Nowsherawan survives for sometime and continues his tyranny, he will offer his entire dominion as his daughter's dowery. instead of the three deserts asked for" "Has my tyranny," exclaimed Nowsherawan, "extended so far that I have become the subject of talk among birds? He wept over his deeds under a feeling of excessive shame and immediately after his return from the chase, ordered a chain of justice to be suspended from his court-house, and a proclamation sent round to the effect that all persons seeking redress should demand justice by shaking the chain instead of finding a go-between to represent their grievances. This practice was rigidly followed. Nowsherawan became a strict administrator of justice and a peaceful ruler, so much so, that his name remains emblazoned in the hearts of the people down to this time as a just and wise monarch. In the course of a few years, the king was blessed with two sons and a daughter from his wife Meher Angez. The sons were named Hurmuz and Faramurz, and the daughter Mehar Nigar. They were brought up in a manner befitting royalty. Of these two sons of the king, one was called by Buzurchemehar Seawash, and the other Dariadil. Bukhtuk had also a son, whom he called by the name of Bukhtyaruk.

One night Nowsherawan had a dream that a black crow coming from the east had flown away with his crown; but that a falcon darting forth from the west had killed the crow, and replaced the crown on his head. This dream roused the king from his slumber. In the morning, he asked Buzurchemehar to interpret it and he read it as follows. "In the east there is a town called Khyber, here a prince by name Husham will be born to the king Alkamah. He will take up arms against you, and after giving you a signal defeat will take away your crown and throne. After this, a boy by name Hamzah will take his birth towards the west in the city of Mecca. He will destroy your enemy and restore your crown and throne to you." The king was rejoiced at the happy news, and having invested the Khaja with robes deputed him at once to Mecca with considerable presents, with a view to enquire about the birth of the child, and his being brought up with all imaginable care and attention as the king's own son.

CHAPTER X.

MISSION OF KHAJA BUZURCHEMEHAR TO MECCA AND HIS ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE BIRTH OF AMIR HUMZAH.

WHEN Buzurchemehar after a long and tedious journey arrived near the city of Mecca, he addressed a letter to Khaja Abdul Motullib, the chief of the tribe of Bani Hashim, informing him of his arrival on pilgrimage, and expressing a desire for an interview. The chief was much pleased on reading the letter and instantly collecting all the residents of the town proceeded to receive the minister, who was conducted into the town with the respect becoming his rank. Fine and elegant houses were vacated for his accommodation, but before fixing his quarters, the Khaja paid a visit to 'kaaba' and then went round to see the respectable citizens of Mecca, whom he treated with reverence and affability. Each of them was paid gold and silver coins, as a present from the king of Persia, and assured, that the king took a special interest in the well-being of the citizens of Mecca considering them as so many of his friends and benefactors.

After this, Buzurchemehar caused it to be proclaimed by beat of drum that if from that time forward a male child were born within the walls of Mecca, he would be taken into the service of the Sultan of Persia; so that whosoever was blessed with a son, should lose no time in bringing the child over to him, that he might be nursed and brought up at the expense of the king and named by himself.

As Buzurchemehar was accompanied by a large number of troops, he was encamped outside the city gate, but it was his practice to pay frequent visits to Khajeh Abdul Motu lib. After a fortnight, as the minister happened to pay his usual visit to the Khajeh, the latter, after exchanging salutations, communicated to him that a son had been born to him. The minister instantly sent for the infant, and after throwing the dice and consulting his horoscope, found that it was the very boy, who was destined to be the terror of the world and who would levy tributes from potent monarchs, extend his arms far and

wide, subjugate bold chiefs (whether they inhabit this world or *Koh-Kaf**), exterminate idolatories, propagate Islam, extend justice and subdue tyranny. He then kissed the forehead of the child and after giving him the name of *Hamza*, congratulated Khajeh Abdul Motullib for his birth. After this, all who were present, raised their hands with Buzurchemehar towards Kaaba, invoked blessings for the safety of the boy, and returned thanks to the Almighty. Buzurchemehar then made over to Khajeh Abdul Motullib several boxes of goldmohurs to meet the expenses required for the maintenance of the child and presented him also with precious jewels, as well as, clothes of valuable texture.

When Abdul Motullib intended to distribute *sherbet* after the custom of the place, Buzurchemehar asked him to wait till the other two persons, whose children, he said, would be, the devoted companions of his son, had arrived. While Buzurchemehar was thus speaking, Basheer, one of the slaves of Abdul Motullib, brought in his new born babe to Buzurchemehar, who gave him the name of *Mokbil wafudar*, or "Mokbil the faithful." He then made over to the father, a purse of goldmohurs for the maintenance of the child and told him that the boy would be the archer of his time and would be surpassed by none in that art.

Basheer took leave of the minister, and while returning home with the purse, he met in the way Omyah Zomeri, a camel-driver, who asked him whence he was coming and how he came to be in the possession of a purse of gold mohurs. On being told all that had happened, Omyah Zomeri returned home in all haste transported with joy and spoke to his wife thus. "Thou hast always been persuading me with the belief that thou art in the family way. If it is so, thou must give birth to the child at once, that I may get hold of a handsome fortune and live in happiness all the days of my life." "You must surely be raving," responded the wife, "or you would never give vent to such nonsense. It is only the seventh month of my pregnancy and how can I give a birth to the child." "If thou takest to hard and continuous coughing," said the husband, "I feel convinced thou wilt bear a child at once. It is well and good if the child were born this moment. If it is born two months after, of what avail will it be to me." Irritated at such irrational words, the wife retorted "Man, you have surely

* A fabulous mountain supposed to surround the world and bound horizon. It is said to be the abode of genii and fairies. Some say it to be mount Caucasus.

gone out of your senses. How can you make me bring forth a child without labour? It is a pity that you are suggesting a course, which is beyond human control." Unable to suppress his passion, Omya Zomeri gave such a severe kick to his poor wife, that she fell rolling on the ground with pain. The child came out from the womb of the agonized mother, whose life became extinct soon after. Omya Zomeri lost no time in taking the babe to Buzurchemehar, wrapped up in the sleeve of his cloak, and placing the child before him said "My lord! fortune has favoured me with a child, whom I have brought here for your inspection." The minister laughed out merrily at the sight of the child and told Khaja Abdul Motullib that this boy would be the chief of the *Ayars*, endowed with uncommon genius and brilliant wit, full of tricks and wicked devices, would paralyze potent kings and daunt the brave. He would conquer and subdue several impregnable forts, and vanquish large troops single-handed. He would be exceedingly clever, cunning and avaricious, but withal a faithful and inseparable companion of Hamza, and bear the strain of friendship with the greatest fidelity. Saying this, Buzurchemehar took the boy in his lap, but he began screaming. The minister put his finger into the child's mouth to silence him, but the latter imperceptibly squeezed his (the minister's) ring out of his finger and then became quiet. When the Khaja did not find the ring on his finger, he made a search for it in the pockets of his garment, but finding no trace of it, kept quiet. At this time the cup of *Sherbet* went round. When the Khaja tried to pour a few drops into the mouth of the child, the ring dropped down on the opening of his mouth. The minister picked up the ring from the ground with a smile on his face and told Khaja Abdul Motullib that it was the child's first act of theft, that he had attempted upon him. After this, the boy was given the name of *Amar*, and two purses of gold mohurs were offered to Omya Zomeri, who was instructed by the minister to nurse and bring up the boy with all imaginable care. Taking the purse of gold mohurs from the Khaja, Omya Zomeri represented that the mother of the boy having expired immediately after his birth, there was no body to take care of him. On this, Buzurchemehar asked Khaja Abdul Motullib to get him nursed along with Hamzah, whose mother had also died. He selected for this purpose, Adya Bano, the mother of Madi Karab, who, he said, had been converted to Islam by Abraham in a dream in order to suckle and nurse Hamzah, and was on her way to Mecca and soon expected. The minister asked the Khajah to receive her as his guest on her arrival, and get

Hamzah to suck the milk from her right breast, and Amar and Mokbil from the left. The Khajah followed the minister's instructions, and as soon as she was reported to have come, he introduced her into his house and gave her *Sherbet* to drink. After this, he made over to her the three children to be nursed and suckled.

When six days had passed after Hamzah's birth, the minister asked Khajah Abdul Motallib to place the cradle of Hamzah on the upper-story of the house the next morning, and told him that he need not be anxious if the cradle happened to disappear from the place. "Around this world" said he, "there is a large river, studded with numerous islands and seaports. Amongst these, there is a place known as *Kohkaf* which is surrounded with innumerable villages, and is the abode of fairies, genii, and demons of various shapes. The king of this place is Shahpal, son of Shahrookh. He is handsome, and well-built and has got a vizier, who can be surpassed by none in wisdom, moral and intellectual gifts. With all his ministerial concerns, the vizier is infinitely pious and spends his time mostly in the service of God. He will take the cradle of Hamzah to his king, but return it again after a week. There are considerable benefits attending this incident and there is nothing to be apprehended. Saying this, Buzurchemehar returned to his troops, leaving Khaja Abdul Motallib to look anxiously for the time foretold by him.

CHAPTER XI.

TRANSPORTATION OF THE CRADLE OF AMEER HUMZAH TO KOH-KAF.

ONE day as Shahpal, son of Shahrookh, the king of Koh-kaf, was seated on Solomon's throne amid all his grandeur and magnificence, surrounded by eighteen tributary kings, besides the courtiers and nobles, the steward of the house came and reported to him after salutation, that the queen had been brought to bed of a comely princess, whose angelic appearance shone like a luminous star. Delighted with the happy news, the king asked his vizier, Khaja Abdul Rahman, who was a man of comprehensive genius and gifted with the knowledge of various arts and sciences, and who had had the occasion of mixing in the society of Solomon, to cast the nativity of the child and select a name for her. In obedience to the king's orders the Khajah gave her the name of *Aman Pari*, or the Fairy of the Sky, and after consulting her horoscope stated, "My Lord, this lady will rule with great pomp and pride over the eighteen parts of Koh-kaf; but eighteen years hence, all the demons, who are now under Your Majesty's subjection, will draw their necks from the yoke of submission, and rebel against Your Majesty and become turbulent and aggressive. They will usurp all the cities and towns, save and except the cities of Gulistan Eram Zurreen, Seemeen and Kakoom, &c., which will only remain under Your Majesty's sway. At this critical juncture, a boy will come from the side of the world inhabited by mankind, and after overthrowing these rebels, restore the lost places to Your Majesty by dint of arms, and strengthen the power of the kingdom again.

The king was very much pleased at the prospect of such a happy termination of rebellion, and asked his minister to ascertain from the science of geomancy, if the boy had already taken his birth, and if so, in what part of the world. The Khaja threw the dice and after consulting the figures said, "This boy, my lord, has already taken his birth in the city of Mecca in Arabia. He is a son of the chief of the place. It is only the sixth day of his birth and he has been named Hamzah. His cradle has been placed by his father on the upper story of the house." The king ordered four *Parizads* to fly to the world and bring the cradle to

him at once. After this, he gave himself up to rejoicing, the door of his treasury being opened wide to mark the felicity of the occasion.

While the king was thus engaged, the *Parizads* brought the cradle of Hamzah, and placed it before his throne. The dazzling beauty of the lad petrified the eyes of the spectators, who stood motionless at the sight of his captivating appearance, not to speak of *Parizads*, who were well nigh bewitched in spite of their own personal attractions. The king took the boy off the cradle and placing him in his lap, kissed his forehead. He then sent for Solomon's eye-powder (collyrium) and applying the same to his eyes, ordered maid-servants and nurses &c. to be brought in. When they were called in, Hamzah was nursed on the breast of a demoness, a fairy, a tigress and a lioness for a week. The Khajah then told the king that from the science of geomancy it had been revealed that this boy would be married to Asman Pari and become his son-in-law. Delighted with this happy prediction, the king sent for another cradle made of precious jewels from his palace, and placing the boy in it, with all imaginable precaution, fastened to it several rubies of dazzling colour that were covered with green and red silk. He then put precious jewels of various colors and sizes in the cradle, and ordered the *Parizads*, who had brought the cradle to take it back to the place, whence it had been transported. This was immediately done, and the fact duly announced to the king.

CHAPTER XII.

RETURN OF BUZURCHEMEHAR TO MADAYEN AND THE KING'S REJOICING.

After a week Buzurchemehar sent word to Khajah Abdul Motullib, desiring him to ascertain if the cradle of Amir Hamza had returned from Kaf. A man was forthwith sent upstairs, who returned with the news that Amir had brought a new cradle, which dazzled the eye, and with the lustre shed by rubies and gems attached to it, had made the whole of the upper-story as bright as day. Hearing this, the Khajah sent intimation to Buzurchemehar of Hamzah's return from Kaf and the state in which he had been found. The minister came forth from among his troops to see Amir, and after having seen him asked leave of the Khajah to return to his country and pay his homage to the Sultan, whom he had left for a long time, as well as, to see his family and his friends. He advised Abdul Motullib to take particular care of Amir, Mokbil and Amar in regard to their nourishment and education, and wished him at the same time to give always an early reply to any communication sent by him, so that it might be entered in the annals of the kingdom in chronological order. He also instructed the Khajah to make Amir Hamza widely known as the adopted son of the Sultan of Persia. The Khajah accepted the minister's instruction readily, and handing over to him a letter of thanks to the Sultan, desired him to present it to his royal master with his compliments.

Taking this epistile, Buzurchemehar started for Madayen. In the course of a short time he arrived in his native land, and approaching the king's presence, handed over to His Majesty the epistile of Khajah Abdul Motullib, whom he extolled for his affableness, courtesy, and dignity of position. The King was very much pleased on the perusal of the letter, and invested his minister with a set of valuable robes.

A few months afterwards, as Nowsherawan graced the throne of Kai Kaoos amidst the assemblage of his ministers, courtiers, nobles, ambassadors and merchants of different countries, news was brought that Bahram Gurd, the king of China, who had

ust ascended the throne of his father and who was an undaunted chief of great valour, had overawed the neighbouring cities and brought under his subjection several kingdoms by dint of the sword, and that instead of paying the last four year's tribute due by him, had the impudence to demand a meek submission from the Sultan of Persia, and payment of tribute, threatening in case of refusal, to exterminate the people of Madayen.

The king was very much concerned at this unhappy news, and asked Buzurchemehar to devise some plan to avert the impending evil. "The king of China," replied the minister, "has not yet acquired sufficient power to resist any opposition, so that it is advisable at present to send a veteran chief with a sufficient force to arrest him, if possible, or cut off his head and bring it to Your Majesty, as a trophy of war; for as soon as his power is sufficiently strengthened, it will be a hard task to subvert him, and the natural consequence of all this will be that serious disturbances will arise within the walls of China." "You are at liberty," said the king to Buzurchemehar, "to depute any body you like on this expedition, that he may crush the rebel before he does any actual mischief to such big dominions." The minister therefore selected Gustaham, the son of Ashk Zarreen Kafsh of Sasan, (who was known to be a chieftain of great valour) for this expedition, and getting him invested by the king with robes, sent him to China, with a strong cavalry of twelve thousand horse to chastise Bahram, with positive instructions to realize from him not only the arrears of tribute due by him, but also something additional in the shape of *Nazranah*, or penalty for his misbehaviour against the king; and in the event of any resistance being offered, he was to be disarmed and sent to the king fettered under an escort. Gustaham saluted the minister and departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

STEALING OF A RUBY BY AMAR AND HIS BEING PLACED UNDER A TEACHER FOR INSTRUCTION.

IT was the practice of Adya Bano, who was appointed to nurse Amir, Mokbil and Amar, to suckle Amir from one breast and the other two companions from the other. In spite of this, Amir grew leaner and Amar fatter than the others day by day. The cause of this change could not be devined, until on a certain night Adya Bano happening to awake from slumber, found Amar had thrown Amir and Mokbil from the bed and was drinking all the milk himself. The next morning, Adya Bano related the fact to the members of the family and stated that the boy would be a notorious thief in his age, for, from his infancy he was disposed to tricks and deception.

In the course of a short time, when Amar was able to crawl on his knees, he took to the practice of entering the chambers of others, and if he happened to find any ring or other ornament of any inmate of the house, he would steal it quietly and place it either under the pillow of Adya Bano, or within her betel-box, and then would lie down as if fast asleep and quite innocent of what had happened. When the owners would search for their property, they would find it either under the pillow of Adya Bano, or within her betel-box. This would amaze her, but she would say nothing through shame and the fear of disgrace.

One day Amar stole a ruby from the cradle of Amir, put it into his mouth, and remained undetected by any body, until the fact was brought to the notice of Khajah Abdul Motullib. On the same day the Khaja's eye happening to fall upon the face of Amar, found one of his cheeks swollen, and was very much annoyed with the maid-servants for their neglect in taking proper care of the child. He called Amar to him to examine the nature of the swelling, but when a gentle pressure was applied to it, the ruby came out of his mouth to the great surprise of the Khajah. "O God," ejaculated the Khajah, "when the boy is so cunning in

his infancy, what evils will he not be guilty of when grown in years." In short, all were grieved at the conduct of Amar, while sometimes his childish knaveries gave them much amusement.

When Amir, Mokbul and Amar were five years' old, Khajah Abdul Motallib placed them under the charge of a Mollah,* who taught the children of Bani Hashim and Bani Omya. According to the custom of the place, the boys were taught "Bismillab" on the first day, that is to say, their instruction was begun with the name of God. On the second day, the Mollah began giving them lessons. Amir and Mokbil read quietly what they were taught, but when Amar was told by the Mollah to say *Alif*† he said, it was straight and indicative of the unity of God. "I tell you", said the Mollah, "to say *Alif* and you say it is straight and indicative of the unity of God. What's that you say? How foolish you are?" "I gave you the right reply to what you said," answered Amar. "You asked me to say *Alif*; my answer was that it was straight and indicative of the unity of God. I do not believe, I have erred in this at all. It is unquestionable that *Alif* is straight, and represents unit; if it is so, then it indicates the unity of God, who is alone and unassociated. If I am lying or imposing upon your confidence, you are at liberty to chastise me and make me say what you wish me to say". In short, it was with great difficulty that Amar was taught the alphabet. When his turn came to be taught that *Alif* was without a dot, *Be* had one dot under it, *Te* and *Se* two or three dots respectively over them, he would very much dislike the Mollah's mode of teaching and would begin grumbling and talking nonsense to his great annoyance. If he happened to be censured, he cared little for his teacher's admonitions and followed his own turn of mind with obstinacy, scattering every advice to the winds in order to carry out his own whims.

Dispirited and hopeless, he spoke to Hamzah one day that he was at liberty to read with the Mollah, and spend his time with him in doing nothing, if he pleased. As for himself, he said, he had given up his intention of receiving instruction under such a teacher, inasmuch as, he had not come to understand accounts from him. If *Alif* was without a dot, or if other letters were with two or three of them, what had he to do with such a reckoning. In fine, Amar would beguile his time in talking stupidly, and

* This term is usually applied to an Arabic or Persian teacher.

† The first letter of the Alphabet in Persian and Arabic.

would not listen to his teacher on any account. At last the Mollah went over to Khajah Abdul Motullib one night and made various complaints against Amar, giving him at the same time a true account of what he had done. He added that the boy neither reads himself, nor would allow Hamzah to read, so that, if it was at all intended to have Hamzah educated, Amar should be removed from his society, and placed under the instruction of some body else. The Khajah wanted to place Amar under some other person for instruction, but Hamzah did not like to bear the separation, and shedding tears told his father that he would go with Amar and would not read a syllable without him. The Khajah was obliged to give up his intention of removing Amar, and observed silence in respect to what the teacher had proposed.

It was the parents' practice to send every day from their house some food to their boys, while in school, according to their respective means. One day the boys happening to be asleep with their teacher at noon, the dishes of food sent to them by their parents were kept in their usual places. Amar, who was not asleep, finding the coast clear, ate as much as he could out of the various dishes and cautiously placed the rest of the food under the pillow of the Mollah. When the boys awoke, and did not find the dishes, they grew uneasy from hunger. "This is undoubtedly an act of Amar" said the Mollah, "who has attempted to play a fresh trick." Annoyed at what the Mollah said, Amar ejaculated, "Fie ! fie ! The proverb that the camel is notorious in a town, is just applicable here. Why is not a search made for the food, and the culprit punished for having taken it ?" The Mollah told Amar to search himself, and the latter feigned ignorance, made a search at first amongst the boys' garments, then elsewhere and finally turned over the Mollah's bed-sheet, where the food was discovered to the great astonishment of the students. Amar burst out triumphantly. "If blasphemy arises in Kaaba, where is the Islam to be looked for ? "If Mollahs be men of such bad intent, what is to be said of the illiterates ?" He asked Hamzah to get up and speak to his father that he would not read under a teacher who was an open thief, and that he had better be placed under the tuition of another teacher of sterling worth and honesty. Incensed with rage, the Mollah gave him some hard slaps and lashes that made him cry bitterly, but through the intervention of Amir, he was excused further chastisement.

The next morning, when the Mollah and the boys were again

asleep, Amar stole the Mollah's Shamla * and pawning it to a confectioner, purchased sweetmeats for Rs. 5, which he brought and kept in the school and then feigned sleep. The Mollah finding an abundance of sweetmeats on getting from his bed was mightily pleased in his heart, but suspected at the same time Amar's tricks. He enquired of the boys about the sweetmeats, but none could say how they had been brought there. When Amar was awakened and asked, he said. "The sweetmeats were brought by my father, sir, who had pledged himself to make an offering to some saint. He had come with one or two of his friends, but finding you asleep went away, leaving word with me to have *Fateha* † read over them, when you awoke and to distribute them amongst the students, his own share to be taken by myself." "In whose name am I to read *Fateha* ?" asked the Mollah. "The *Fateha* will have to be read in the name of *Baba Shamla*," responded Amar. "What a curious name it is," replied the Mollah. "I have never heard such a name assigned to any saint." Such names are generally given to *Fakirs* by their spiritual guides," answered Amar, "and there is no reason for surprise." The Mollah being satisfied with Amar's explanation, read the *Fateha* accordingly. After this, the Mollah devoured the choicest of sweetmeats himself, letting the rest to be distributed amongst the students. Amar took his own share out of the same and ate with other students. With the choicest sweetmeats eaten by the Mollah, Amar had maliciously mixed up some Jamal Gota (*Jatropha curcas*). After a while, the Mollah felt an unusual roaring in his stomach and had stools after stools, until he was unable to move and go to the privy. His limbs began to totter and his head to swim through debility, which sunk his spirit and in fact reduced him to a very miserable plight. "What was mixed up with the sweetmeats, asked the Mollah of Amar, "that made me so uneasy ?" "The sweetmeats were eaten by all of us," replied Amar, "and it is strange we have not even belched." "If the sweetmeats have proved so harmful to you, it is curious that none of us have been afflicted thereby. It is therefore evident that you have surfeited yourself with them regardless of their sanctity ; or else, *Baba Shamla* is not such a saint, as would give you any affliction." Amir having ascertained Amar's wickedness in this matter, made the Mollah drink a sufficient quantity of butter-milk, which not only assuaged the heat of his stomach, but stopped his motions too. When the day was about

* A kind of turban made of shawls.

† Passage in the Koran which is read to invoke blessings on the souls of the dead.

to close, the Mollah set the boys free to go home. At this time he intended also to return home and when he wanted to put on his suit of clothes, he discovered to his great astonishment that his *Shamla* was missing. Failing to find any trace of it, he wrapped up his waist-band round his head and left the school for home. As he approached near the confectioners's shop, the latter ran to him with the *Shamla* and asked. "Sir, why did you pledge your *Shamla* for sweetmeats, thus putting me to disgrace? Did you think five rupees, for which you pawned your *Shamla*, so heavy an amount, that I should have mistrusted you in sending the sweetmeats on credit? I was not so anxious for my price. This shop is yours Sir, and you are at full liberty to get from it any kind of sweetmeats you require." The Mollah was thunder-struck at the sight of his turban, and replied what appeared to him resonable. He was obliged to pay Rs. 5 to the confectioner to redeem his *Shamla*. "This is surely the very sweetmeats," reflected he in his mind, "which Amar had brought to me this morning to have *Fateha* read over it. Be that as it may, I would not let him go unpunished tomorrow morning for this unpardonable misbehaviour."

As the morning dawned, Amar came betimes to the school and after dusting, cleaning and setting in order the Mollah's bed-sheet, cushion and pillow, engaged himself in reading his book most attentively. The Mollah finding him in the school earlier than usual presumed that he had become frightened, so he thought he need not punish him that day, but let him go on with his studies undisturbed and unmolested. After giving lessons to the boys, the Mollah told his pupils, that he was going to the bath and would soon return; meanwhile, they must be going on reading their books and should not leave the school until his return from the bath. Before, however, going to the bath-room he sent the hair-dye through Amar, but the latter cleverly mixed with it on the way a quantity of powdered orpiment, so that, when after applying the dye to his beard and moustaches, the Mollah washed it off with hot water, his beard and moustaches were washed clean off from his face. The Mollah was greatly ashamed at the change in his appearance, and did not show his face all that day: when night set in, he veiled himself closely and went over to Khajah Abdul Motullib to represent his grievances. As soon as he appeared before him, he showed his face to him and beating it vehemently under an ebullition of excessive mortification, proceeded to narrate his lamentable story in the following terms. "Sir, in my present age Amar has spared no pains

to drag me to shame and disgrace. He has been the cause of disfiguring my face, in a most abominable manner. I can scarcely show my face to any body. I have come to appeal to you and seek redress at your hands." The Mollah recounted to him all that had happened with regard to his *Shamla*, how *Jatropha carcus* had come to be mixed up with the sweetmeats brought to him by Amar, and what sufferings he had had to undergo on eating the adulterated sweetmeats.

After making some excuses, the Khajah let the Mollah depart and punishing Amar severely, turned him out of the house. "My dear son," said he to Amir, "if I ever find you breathe a word for Amar, I tell you I shall be much displeased with you. This unworthy wretch is not a fit person to keep company with; much less to be introduced into the house. His society is baneful to good reputation and injurious to a man's character. I warn you to avoid his society, and think no more of him." Amir, who could hardly bear the separation from Amar, retired sorrowful and heart-broken to the upper-floor of the house and for a couple of days and nights and gave himself up to unrestrained weeping without taking food and refreshment. This fact gradually came to the notice of the Khajah, who being apprehensive of the Amir's health, was obliged to call Amar back to him and wrote a letter of recommendation to the Mollah, who excused his fault and readmitted him to the school.

One day some food was sent to the Mollah by one of his pupils. He ordered Amar to take it to his house, but warned him at the same time not to play any tricks in the way. "If the cover of the tray," said he, "is opened, the chicken, which is concealed within, would fly and then it would be very difficult for you to get hold of it." "What business have I," replied Amar, "in opening the cover of the tray? I would take it to your wife as faithfully as possible and bring her reply to you." Saying this, he went off with the tray. When he arrived near the Mollah's house, he betook himself to a secluded spot and opening the cover of the tray was tempted by a plate of nice flavoury cooked rice prepared with sugar. Being then quite hungry, and finding a plate of delicious food before him, he ate as much as he could, leaving the rest to be devoured by the dogs. After this, he tore off the cover of the tray and putting an empty plate within, proceeded straight to the house of the Mollah. Getting to his house, he called his wife from without, and when she appeared, he made over to her the tray stating that the Mollah had warned her not to open it

and directed her at the same time not to prepare his supper, nor even to allow his few neighbours to cook their food that night. The poor woman being utterly ignorant of Amar's mischievous tricks, did not cook food that night and sent word to certain neighbouring females, who were her intimate friends, not to cook food in their houses. As for the Mollah, when he left the school that day, he went to see a friend of his on his way home. The latter did not leave him till midnight, and though he insisted on the Mollah to sup with him, he declined with some excuses, inasmuch as, the sweet rice sent by him to his house was uppermost in his mind. On returning home, he asked his wife what she had cooked, apologizing at the same time for his late return. "I have cooked nothing in obedience to the order sent by you," answered she, "and have also prevented some of my neighbours to cook food in their houses. You should have returned home a little early to-night, but instead of doing so, you have kept yourself out till the night is far advanced without caring for your guests, who are yet awake and sitting without supper with their husbands and children, awaiting your return. However, the food you have sent me is kept untouched. First send some thing out to your guests, and then eat yourself." On hearing this, the Mollah's brain swam with unprecedented misgivings. "This cannot be devoid of some sharp trick on the part of Amar," reflected he. "He has no doubt played some fresh game, and it is not known what other course he has already taken to annoy me." The Mollah sent for the tray and when he removed its cover, he found to his utter surprise the plate of rice entirely empty. He upbraided himself for the folly in having sent the dish through Amar, after the experience he had already had of his previous wickedness; but there was no remedy and he was obliged to spend the night with his family and friends without supper. When the morning dawned, he took some breakfast and going over to the school, asked Amar what had become of the food sent through him to his wife yesterday. "I know nothing of the food you refer to," replied Amar, "but the chicken, which you had ordered me to take to your wife, tearing open the cover of the tray in the midway flew away. I could not trace it out, despite all my efforts." "Why did you prevent my wife from cooking food for me," asked the Mollah, "and when did I tell you to invite my neighbours to supper last night?" "This was of course a mistake on my part Sir," answered Amar, "and I apologize for it." The Mollah punished Amar severely, but he was pardoned further punishment through the mediation of Amir.

Amar, who gradually turned out an inveterate enemy of the Mollah, remained always in wait to renew his attack upon him. One day Abujehal and Abu Sofain, who were also reading in the same school, happening to be fast asleep at noon with other students Amar took the ring of the former out of his finger and going over to the house of the Mollah, put it unperceived in the betel-box of his daughter and brought her ear-ring on the plea that it was wanted by her father. Putting the ear-ring on the finger of Abujehal, he went to sleep.

When the boys awoke and began reading their lessons after washing their face and hands, the Mollah's eyes suddenly fell upon the ear-ring of his daughter, which Abujehal wore on his finger. He asked Abujehal how he had come to be in possession of the ear-ring. The boy was confounded at the sight of the ornament and with apparent dismay expressed his utter ignorance as to how it had come to be on his finger. "I am fully acquainted with all the mysteries connected with this ear-ring," ejaculated Amar, "and although it is beyond the bounds of respect to make a disclosure of the secret attending the ornament, I cannot help concealing a matter, which so delicately concerns you." "When during the midday" proceeded he, "you and all the boys fall fast asleep, Abujehal goes to your house stealthily and returns from there forthwith. Today when he rose up to go to your house after his wonted habit, my eyes opened accidentally and I followed his footsteps. I found that on reaching your house, he shook the latch of the door, when your daughter came out and kissing each other, entered into some conversation about their clandestine meetings. After this, Abujehal placed his ring on her finger and taking her ear-ring himself, retraced his steps to the school. Seeing all this, I crept back quietly and put myself to sleep.

On hearing this disgraceful story, blood was suffused in the eyes of the Mollah and without weighing for a moment the authenticity or otherwise of Amar's report, he darted forth like a ferocious beast and snatching the ear-ring from the hand of Abujehal, pinioned and beat him most cruelly. After this, he repaired to his house in a fit of towering passion, and finding the ring of Abujehal safe and secure in the betel-box of his daughter lost all control of himself. Catching hold of the poor girl by the locks, slapped her rosy cheeks in such a manner that she writhed with pain and swooned. The mother of the girl ran breathless cursing and abusing the Mollah for beating his

innocent daughter so cruelly and on reaching him struck him on the back with both her hands so violently that the Mollah letting his daughter go, fell on his wife furiously. The husband and wife were then engaged in frantic combat with each other. The beard of the former was held fast by the latter, while the dishevelled hair of the latter was in the hands of the former. The howl and cry brought forth a crowd of spectators, who upbraided the Mollah for treating his wife so foolishly. In short, people interceded and separated them, reproaching the Mollah for his cowardly conduct towards a woman.

The next day the boys being away from the school on account of Friday and being engaged in their sports and amusements, Amar found the coast clear, and repairing to the shop of a pedlar, told him that his wife had been taken seriously ill, and that he had been sent to give him prompt intimation. On hearing this news, the pedlar ran weeping and wailing towards his house, while Amar, who had accompanied him a short distance, left him on the way and returning to his shop asked his agent to give him a large box of needles, which, he said, was wanted by his master for sale to a person, who had offered to pay him a handsome price. Believing him and being unaware of his duplicity and fraud, he handed him a box of needles such as he wanted. Taking the box, Amar, went straight to the school and availing himself of the absence of the boys, pierced the needles through the mattress, bed-sheet and pillows of the Mollah, and then went home quietly.

The Mollah having had a quarrel with his wife that day, did not like to stay in the house, so sought the school to spend his night quietly there. No sooner did he put his feet on the bed, than were they pricked by the needles. Screaming with pain, he sat on his hips, which were also pierced; he then threw himself down upon the bed, when the needles penetrated his back and waist. Full of pain and agony he turned over on his side, and there too the needles found their way. In fact, his whole body was pierced with needles and there being no one to pick them out, he lay moaning and agonizing, until his whole body was swollen, and there was a profuse discharge of blood from the roots of his hairs.

The next day, when the boys came to the school, they found the Mollah weltering in blood and groaning in agony. The

boys began picking the needles out of his body, while the Mollah shrieked in anguish and kept rolling on the bed. By this time Amar, who attended the school later than usual that day, appeared, and finding the Mollah in a miserable plight, wept aloud and said that if he could only get hold of the fellow, who had perpetrated such an act of atrocity upon his teacher, he would leave no stone unturned to wreak his vengeance upon him. Saying this, he instantly brought a litter to remove the Mollah to a surgeon, and as he was passing by a pedlar's shop, he was recognized by the shopkeeper, who ran to him breathless and said, "You little fellow! You appear to be a very mischievous boy indeed. You deceived me out-right by a false report that my wife was totally ill, and thus making me leave my shop for home, you availed yourself of the opportunity of taking several thousand packets of needles from my agent in my name. I have now got hold of you and will show you how you should be punished for your impudent rascality." The Mollah, who heard the pedlar say all this, was alarmed, and turning towards him asked when the boy had taken the needles from his shop. While the Mollah was engaged in conversation with the pedlar, Amar finding the mystery revealed, slipped away from the place, and returning to the school, spoke to Amir and Mokbil, "My friends, let God protect you all, I can live no longer in this town and I have come to bid you adieu for good. Amir was troubled on hearing the bad news and asked Amar to speak to him frankly what the matter really was. "My brain is too distracted now," said he, "to enable me to give you a faithful account of what has happened in the way. I shall relate to you all that has come to pass as soon as I find myself a little composed." Amir, although perfectly aware of Amar's artifice, could hardly relish the idea of living without him and therefore made up his mind to accompany him whenever he wished to go. Thus Amir, Mokbil and the other students, who lived on terms of friendship with Amar, left the school in a body casting, as they proceeded, furtive glances, as if, some body was following them to watch their movements.

In short, Amar betook himself with all his followers to one of the recesses of mount Abul-kobais and spent the whole day and night in that seclusion without food and refreshment. When Amir was unable to resist the cravings of hunger, he asked Amar to look for victuals. The latter signified his readiness to execute the order and issuing forth from the recess of the mountain

proceeded towards the town. On coming to the shop of a butcher, he took from him a bladder and going over to the back of the house of an old woman, called Zobaïda, began catching her hens on a dung-hill by adopting the following stratagem. He knotted one end of the tube and threw it on the dunghill, where the hens were picking grain. Thus any of the fowls happening to swallow the knotted end of the tube was immediately caught without hiss or noise by the bladder being blown up from the other end and the throat of the fowl getting choaked by the process. Having thus bagged the old woman's fowl, Amar washed and wrapped the flesh in a hand-kerchief with all imaginable precaution. Not satisfied with what he had already taken out of the old woman's stock of poultry, Amar meditated on entering her house, and getting hold of any thing else he could find to serve as provision for his companions. He therefore threw stones on the thatching of the old woman's house, and when she came out to look for the author of the mischief, he took advantage of the opportunity and entering her house from the back-door, bolted off with a pot full of eggs, that he found in a corner of the room.

Proceeding a little further, Amar had the flesh of the fowl roasted and the eggs fried by a shopkeeper. He then purchased from him cakes, and some other victuals worth five rupees. All this he arranged in a tray, which he covered tightly with his scarf. Having done so, and asking the shopkeeper to send his man along with him to take the price of his articles from Khajah Abdul Mottullib, who had entertained his friends, he left the shop with the tray on his head. Hearing the Khaja's name, the shopkeeper did not demand the price, but quietly ordered his man to accompany Amar. Going a little way off, Amar asked the man to go and stop in the antechamber of the Khajah, until his return from the market with some cheese, which he had forgotten to purchase. Thus getting rid of the man, Amar strode back to mount Abul-Kobais. Amir and his followers were mightily pleased to see Amar return with a tray of the choicest food. Amir, who was perfectly aware of Amar's artifices, asked him how he got an elegant assortment of dishes in so short a time. "Take your dinner first," replied he, "and then ask whatever you like. It is no use wasting time on a subject, which can as well be touched upon after dinner." Amir partook of the dinner with all his friends and thus appeased his hunger.

Return we now to the man, who had been sent by the

shop-keeper with Amar to take the price of his cakes &c. It is related that this man went direct to the Khaja and asked him, after conveying his master's complements, for the price of the articles sent through Amar. The Mollah, who was present there reciting his own lamentable story, was horrified at this fresh incident. At this moment the old woman appeared with her woe-begone tale that Amar had robbed her of eggs, which were the only means of her support. The Khajah asked the shopkeeper's man, which side Amar had taken after slipping him on the way. "I saw him going," said he, "towards mount Abul Kobais, and I found him a little haggard and terror-stricken glancing around as he went on his way." The Khajah let the man and the old woman depart after giving them their prices and asked the Mollah to proceed at once to Abul Kobais, and get hold of Amar with the help of his pupils.

Overtaken by fresh adversity, the Mollah proceeded towards mount Abul Kobais with his army of students to capture Amar. No sooner did the latter see his old teacher coming with his juvenile force to seize him, than did he burst into a fit of laughter and say, "Lo! the Mollah is coming with his band of students to arrest me. He shall soon find how deservedly he is punished for his bold adventure. Hearing Amar speaking in such a strain, the Mollah lost all courage to budge an inch forward. He remained fixed where he was, but directed Abu Sofian and others of his disciples to advance and catch hold of Amar, he himself darting a look at him to ensure his meek submission.

When Abu Sofian and Abu Jehal approached within ear-shot of Amar, the latter addressed them defiantly as follows." "What calamities, my friends, have overtaken you that you have ventured to come hither to get your heads smashed? The Mollah has lost his senses in having undertaken a task, which is utterly beyond his province to execute. You had better return to your homes, safe and sound, and give up the idea of following the whims of your inconsiderate teacher." Abu Jehal did not listen to Amar's remonstrances. Gallantly he advanced to execute his mission, when Amar finding him within convenient distance, lost no time in picking up pieces of sharp stones from the ground and striking him on the face with such effect that it was miserably bruised, the sharp pieces penetrating the surface of his face and forehead like so many shots. After such a treatment at the hands of Amar, Abu Jehal retreated weeping and rubbing his eyes. All

his comrades lost courage and refused to move forward with the certain result of meeting a similar fate. Finding his students thus giving way, the Mollah ventured to proceed in person impressed with the idea that his personal appearance on the field would daunt the unruly vagabond, but no sooner did he do so, than did Amar pelt a stone at him with such tremendous force that it struck his forehead and caused the blood to gush forth, which made him reel and retreat with all his students from the field of battle. On return to the Khajah, the Mollah showed his head and Abu Jehal's face, and related to him all that had happened in his encounter with Amar. "The treatment which I have received at the hands of Amar," said he, "in my old age are beyond forbearance. I have already been subjected to the most unwarrantable ignominies, and this is the last push to which I have been unluckily driven. Such was the treatment I was destined to receive at the hands of Amar through your kindness, sir, and they are all and enough for me to think any more of the position I hold." Hearing this deplorable account, the Khajah lost all patience and rode personally to mount Abul Kobais after, the direction given by the Mollah. Amar was discomfited, when he saw at a distance the Khajah coming himself to seize him. He said to Amir "My friend, the Khajah is coming personally to catch us and we are now helpless and undone. I cannot devine what punishment will be inflicted on me, if he only succeeds in getting me into his clutches. I therefore leave you in all haste to do what you think proper for yourself."

When the Khajah entered the valley of the mountain, he found Amar had made good his escape. He therefore took Amir on the back of his camel, letting his slave take charge of Mokbil and the other children. On reaching home, he consoled Amir with endearing and reassuring words. "My good son," said he, "I warn you not to bring to your lips the name of Amar again. You must not call him again to your house. The children of good and respectable families should always hold aloof from the baneful companionship of such evil-mongers. Amar will doubtless spoil you totally and cause a stain on your character calculated to injure the high reputation of your ancestors."

Amir, who could hardly pass a moment without Amar, gave vent to his tears heedless of the remonstrances of his father. He did not take food and drink for a whole week. When the Khajah found him in such a plight, he became apprehensive of his life and was obliged to send persons in quest of Amar.

"My son," said he, "although I have been obliged to restore Amar to you again, I warn you emphatically that you should act no more under the evil influence of that dreadful scoundrel, nor should you lend your ears to his misleading counsels, however friendly they may appear to you. Whenever you feel disquieted in mind, take a walk in your garden, but be careful not to enter another's garden even by mistake. I trust my paternal advice to you will remain indelibly stamped in your heart."

One day Amar persuaded Amir to take a walk in his father's garden. The latter complied with his wishes and on entering the garden was exceedingly overjoyed with its captivating sceneries. While he was promenading and regaling himself on its graceful walks, Amar stole out of the place, and entering a neighbour's garden devoured a goodly number of the delicious fruits he found there. When he returned to Amir, he extolled the beauty of the garden and prevailed on him to walk into it. As the garden was close to his own, Amir repaired to it with his companions and found it studded with a variety of rare and choicest flowers, which together with several date trees with bunches of their fruits, and the small rivulets flowing through the parterres, gave a picturesque appearance to the place. In the middle of the garden was a marble terrace as white as alabaster and dazzling to the sight. Amir took his seat upon it, while Amar walking here and there began eating the fruits of the various trees. After a while he returned to Amir eating some fruits that he had plucked from the date trees. Amir wanted to taste them, but Amar declined to give him any, saying that he had obtained them with great difficulty by climbing up a tree at the risk of his life. He told Amir to get the fruits down himself, if he liked to eat some. Amir got to one of these trees but when he intended to climb, Amar ejaculated. "Such trees my dear sir, can only be climbed up by persons like myself and not by a corpulent fellow like you. Were I of the same build as yourself, I would fain have taken the tree off its roots and hurled it to the ground." Amir being a little provoked by this taunt, gave such a violent push to the trunk of the tree that it fell to the ground. "It is not commendable" said Amar, "to pull down such a tree, which I could as easily do in spite of my inferior constitution. The tree forsooth was worm-eaten and to have uprooted it was not after all a matter of much consequence." Amir flew into rage at Amar's sarcasm and pulled up instantly another strong tree from its roots. "This was also worm-eaten," said Amar, "but if you can bring your

strength to bear against yonder tree, which with its thick trunk is no doubt strong enough to try one's strength, I will then think you really strong and will respect your power. Amir became more exasperated and getting to the tree pointed out by Amar, threw it down with one tremendous blow. When so many trees had been uprooted, Amar cried, "O Arab ! why in trying your strength are you destroying and desolating another's garden without the least fear of God ?" So saying, he hurried to the owner of the garden and told him that a high wind had just blown down three big trees of his garden". "There was not a breath of wind here," answered he, "to shake even the leaves of the trees. Whence came the wind that blew down the trees ?" "Just go to the garden," retorted Amar, "and see for yourself." When the owner went to his garden, he found that in reality the three big trees, which were the support of his children, had been levelled to the ground. He began weeping most bitterly for the loss thus sustained, but Amir taking compassion, gave him three camels as compensation for his heavy loss, which he received with thanks and departed. When returning home with the camels, he was met on the way by Amar, who charged him with defrauding a young man of his camels, and said that unless he gave one to him, he would not let them go for sale without causing much annoyance. The man was afraid of Amar and giving him one of his camels departed with the rest.



CHAPTER XIV.

RECEIVING OF GIFTS BY AMIR, MOKBIL AND AMAR.

ONE day as Amir was sitting in the veranda of his house with Mokbil and Amar, he saw a multitude of people passing before him. He asked Amar to ascertain and inform him without delay who these men were, and where they were going. Amar lost no time in bringing the news to Amir that some caravans of horsedealers had come to the town, and that the people were flocking to see the animals. Prompted by a desire to satisfy his curiosity, Amir walked to the place with his companions and was exceedingly pleased with the beauties of the animals, which belonged to various regions. Among these animals there was a horse fastened with chains in front and behind. He was placed under a canopy with his mouth and eyes covered, and it was evident from his awkward position that he was a ferocious beast necessitating the above precautions to prevent his attacking the groom.

Going to the owner, Amar ingratiated himself into his friendship and asked him why he had chained the horse with such care. "This horse," replied he, "is a dreadful animal: he has all the worst vices in him: none dare approach him, much less ride on his back: he is given his forage with the utmost care, and due precaution is taken to keep him off from doing injury to any body." "All that you say about the animal," said Amar, "appears to me childish and I cannot believe for a moment your purile story. What would you lose if any body rode on his back?" "I do not find any one here," answered the owner, "who is capable of undertaking so hazardous an adventure. I pledge my word to surrender this valuable animal to him that can ride on it. Having made the owner take a solemn oath in the presence of certain other merchants, who were cited as witnesses in the matter, Amar returned to Amir and induced him to mount the steed. Defiantly did he approach the horse and get the covers of his eyes and mouth removed; chains were taken off and the animal was saddled and bridled at once. When Amir attempted to ride him,

he began to show his usual vices, but Amir quite undaunted sprang upon his back. The horse assumed a threatening attitude and in attempting to throw off his rider, began pawing the ground, dashing forward, rearing, plunging and kicking backward with great violence. A smart blow on the head made the horse perspire throughout. He cast his neck downwards with the timidity of a goat and became quiet. Amir could now make him trot, gallop or run with ease, but when he at last made him gallop at full speed, he flew like the wind. Breathing the open air of the field and being naturally of a restive disposition, he could not be stopped, until Amir was obliged to bring the full pressure of his weight to bear upon his back, which broke the animal's loins. The horse fell to the ground, and Amir was obliged to walk home on foot. Unaccustomed to walk a long distance, the soles of his feet became miserably sore and being unable to walk further, he sat down under a tree quite exhausted. After a while he beheld a veiled horseman coming towards him leading a piebald steed richly caparisoned. When the horseman approached, he saluted Amir after the custom of the place and addressed him as follows, "Hamzah ! the horse that you see here is the animal of the prophet Issac and is known by the name of *Syah Kaitas*. By the order of God I have brought this steed for you and make you a gift of it. If God grants, you will be discomfited by none, nor will the lustre of your glory be dimmed before any potentate. All will remain under the yoke of your supremacy and bear the brunt of your sword with calm forbearance. Will you therefore remove the heap of stones before you and dig the ground under it? You will find there a chest containing a variety of the choicest arms used by the preceding prophets and potentates. These you may use at the time of need and try their virtue." Amir instantly removed the stones and experienced a wonderful development of strength in his limbs, so much so, that he could hardly form an idea of it.

When the chest was brought out of the ground, Amir found therein the cloak of the prophet Ishmael, the helmet of Hud, the armour of David, the gloves of Joseph, the stockings of Saleh, the girdles and swords of Rustam, Samsam and Kamkam Burkhy, the shield of Gurshasap, the *Gurz* (battle-club) of Sam, son of Nariman, the Scimitar of Sohrab and the spear of Noah. Amir dressed himself with these exultingly and after invoking the name of God, vaulted into the saddle. The veiled horseman disappeared from the presence of Amir, leaving him to

ruminate upon his present position. It is said that the veiled horseman was no other than the angel Gabriel, whom God had sent down to make a gift to Amir of the vests and armour that had been reserved for him until that occasion. Thus armed and attired, Amir rode back to Mecca galloping on his new steed with the air of majesty depicted on his face.

To return to Amar. It is related that when the merchant's steed ran off with Amir, he followed the latter dashing and tumbling away for twenty miles, until being out of breath, and in fact quite exhausted and getting the soles of his feet all sore and pricked with thorns, fell senseless under a tree. When he recovered his senses, he found the prophet Khizir at his head side cheering and consoling him in his present distracted condition. He was raised from the ground and thus addressed, "O Amar! Raise yourself from the ground. By the command of God I have come here to bless and tell you that you will outstrip all in running." With these words the prophet disappeared. Amar sprang up to his feet and with a view to try the truth of the prophet's words, he began to run and experienced in himself a sense of surpassing swiftness, so much so, that he felt he could even beat the wafting wind in speed. In quest of Amir, he went onward in the direction in which he had seen him proceed. Going over a short distance, he saw Amir coming towards him. Amar was naturally astonished to find Amir clad in brilliant armour and riding on a new steed, and with apparent surprise ejaculated, "O Arab speak out candidly what have you done with the merchant's horse, and whom have you murdered in order to get hold of this horse and armour?" "What a queer question you venture to ask?" responded Amir. "To take one's life is not my profession but yours. By the command of the Omnipotent, I have been gifted by the angel Gabriel with all that you see. The horse is the one the prophet Isaac rode, while the armour I have put on belongs to various prophets. God has vouchsafed to grant me all these and I have used them in accordance with the instructions of Gabriel." "I will not believe you," said Amar, "until your horse outruns me even by a few paces." "This fellow has surely gone mad," reflected Amir, "or else, he would not give vent to such an absurd and impossible proposition. Can ever a man beat a horse in running? Let him, however, have his wishes, and understand his folly." "Well then," said Amir to Amar, "put yourself side by side of the horse and run along with the animal if you will." "We must lay a wager," responded Amar, "before we show ourselves on the field."

"You are at liberty to lay any wager you like," said Amir, "and I have no objection to accept it." "Should I happen to outstrip your steed," replied Amar, "I would take ten camels from you; on the other hand, should I fall behind, I pledge that my father would tend the camels of your father for one year without wages." Amir put spurs to his steed, Amar starting with the animal at the same time. Both were running side by side. On they went for twenty miles without outrunning each other. Amir was surprised at Amar's speed and asked him how he happened to get such wonderful agility in his limbs. He answered that he had also been gifted by the prophet Khizir. When the news of Amir being borne off by the merchant's steed across the plain of Mecca reached Abdul Matallib, he got very much alarmed and instantly issued forth from the city gate with the nobles of the town in anxious suspense regarding Amir's life. But no sooner did he come out of the town, than Amir appeared in view on a beautiful steed clad in armour with a noble and majestic air, which bespoke his future grandeur and magnificence, while Amar accompanied him catching hold of the *Shikarbanda**

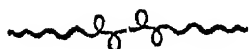
Khaja's anxieties were dissipated. His pallid countenance assumed a scarlet tinge at the sight of Amir. He returned thanks to God and inspired with the tender feelings of a father, advanced forward to clasp him in his arms. Amir dismounted from the steed and prostrated himself to kiss the feet of his father. Khaja folded him to his breast and with tears in his eyes, retuned home and distributed alms to the poor for his safe return.

As regards Mokbil it is related that when he found Amir and Amar so gifted, he was overtaken with extreme mental dejection in not having shared the good luck of his companions, and considering himself inferior in position resolved on leaving their company and entering into the service of Nowsherawan. Thus fixing his mind, he emerged from the town and set out for the city of Madayen. After travelling a few miles, he found himself sinking with fatigue, and took rest under a tree. Dispirited and heartbroken, he reflected, that it was better for him to die than lead a life of disgrace and misery and thus taking a sudden resolve, he climbed a tree and making a noose with his waist-band, one extremity of which he fastened to a branch, he suspended himself by the neck. As he was struggling

* Cord for tying with (tied to a horse saddle.)

for life, some unknown person appeared and saved him from strangulation. He then placed a bow and five arrows in the hand of Mokbil and asked him to rise up and take courage. "I make a gift of the bow and arrows," said the unknown to Mokbil, "and pronounce the blessing that you should be the unrivalled archer of your days, and be overcome by no one in archery." With these words he disappeared, while Mokbil retraced his way to Mecca with a heart thrilling with joy at the success which he achieved against his friends.

While Mokbil was missing from the company of Amir and Amar, both of them began to grow anxious for him. Amar issued forth in quest of him, and as he had only gone a little further from the town, Mokbil appeared before him. Transported with joy at the sight of his friend, Amar bounded forward to clasp him to his breast. Mokbil reciprocated his tender affection and both of them returned to Amir to relate the incidents of their adventure. Mokbil showed Amir his bow and arrows, and related to him how he had come in possession of them. Amir was much pleased with this happy news and congratulated Mokbil on his good fortune.



CHAPTER XV.

EXACTION OF TRIBUTE BY AMIR FROM THE KING OF YEMAN AND HIS CONVERSION INTO ISLAM.

A MIR had stepped into his seventh year and was beginning to show evidences of his high birth and chivalrous spirit. It was at this period of his life that he walked one day with Amar and Mokbil towards a market to amuse himself. The process of rent collection was going on in the heart of the market and certain persons of Sohail, the commander of the troops of the king of Yeman, who had been sent to collect the rent on account of his monarch, were dealing most inhumanely with those, who had no means to make a ready payment, or who wanted time to discharge their liabilities. The din of the market combined with the tumultuous waves of the clamour attracted Amir's notice. He asked Amar to enquire into the cause of this uproar, and the news was brought to him that the people of the king of Yeman were engaged in collecting rent, and those who were unable to pay were being very cruelly treated. Compassionating the market-people, Amir directed Amar to warn the collecting agents against this exercise of tyranny. The order was immediately carried out, but no one would listen to Amar in the uproar of the collection. Amar then advanced in person and penetrating into the crowded multitude, asked Amar to direct the shopkeepers to stop payment and take back all that they had given. Amar and Mokbil interfered in the work of collection and tried to prevent the soldiers from using force, but it was of no avail. Amir now unable to restrain himself, bounded forward and dispersed the collectors of rent, breaking the leg of one and fracturing the skull of another. They now fled pell-mell to their camp and announced to their chief officer that a boy of tender age by name Kamzah had not only interfered in the work of collection, but had taken back by force all that had been collected, thrashing in a cruel manner those who had tried to oppose him.

While they were thus recounting to their chief this sad episode, Amir appeared on his noble steed clad in armour and

accompanied by his two companions Amar and Mokbil. Seeing Amir, Sohail came out of his tent and addressed him "Boy, your steed and armour tempt me. Make a present of them to me at once that I may excuse your fault, or you shall repent for what you have done." Amir chuckled at this ridiculous threat and responded "Sohail if your life is dear to you, embrace the faith of Islam quietly or take the consequence of your refusal." "What has happened to this boy," retorted Sohail, "that he is uttering words beyond himself!" He ordered his men to pull Amir down from the steed and strip him of his armour, and so in the twinkling of an eye, he was surrounded by the attendants of the commander, who attempted to use violence. Like a furious hurricane, Amir dashed through his assailants assisted by his companions, and by the aid of the warclub, arrows and swords, trampling many under the hoofs of his steed, and strewing the field with the dead and dying.

When Sohail found a number of his men thus slain, he flew into a rage and rushed forward to attack Amir. The latter caught hold of him by his waist-band and pulled him off from his steed, and when he was about to dash him, he implored mercy and was put down lightly on the ground.

Sohail embraced Islam with one thousand of his soldiers, and Amir hugged him to his breast. He was allowed a seat on his right hand and was treated with all imaginable kindness. At this time, Amar, Mokbil and Sohail with other soldiers formed into a stout regiment under the banner of an intrepid leader. They offered him presents to recognize him as their chief, and the latter in turn invested them with robes according to their ranks.

Amir now returned to Mecca and after paying a visit to Kaaba, proceeded straight to kiss his sire's feet. The Khajah was exceedingly pleased on hearing of the bravery of Amir, but his features were somewhat overcast, because he apprehended a deadly vengeance from the mighty king of Yeman. "Although it is a matter of unbounded gratification to me," said the Khajah to Amir, "to find you rising to the pitch of glory and occupying the position of a chief, yet I am afraid the citizens of Mecca will be jealous of you. The king of Yeman, moreover, is a puissant monarch, having a fierce cavalry of forty thousand besides foot soldiers. If he were to take arms against the residents of Mecca, they would fall into trouble and blame you."

"So long as I have your blessing and Heaven protects me," responded Amir, "I care not a fig for the king of Yeman, however great may be his powers and the resources of his kingdom. I will give the citizens of Mecca no occasion to blame me, nor will I allow any troubles to overtake them. I must go and overthrow the man at once, unless he quietly accepts the true faith of Islam.

Taking leave of the Khajah, Amir started for Yeman with one thousand horse and Amar, Mokbil and Sohail. In the course of the journey, he was separated from his troop, while in conversation with Amar, and as they went galloping on their steed inhaling the sweet breeze of the meadows and enjoying the beautiful natural sceneries around, they caught a glimpse of a handsome young man in a Fakir's grab, seated in a melancholy and dejected condition, as if some thing, over which he had no control, was corroding his thoughts. Amir was moved on seeing him in this condition, and reining in his steed drew up to him. After salutation, he asked the reason of his assuming a Fakir's costume, and remaining sorrowful and absorbed in his thoughts. The young man gave no reply, but when Amir became more earnest and gently persuaded him to express the nature of his affliction, he drew a deep and mournful sigh and said, "My friend ! I am a victim to such a disease as has no remedy in the world " "I know of no malady except the mortal one," responded Amir, "that has no remedy. Pray expose your afflictions to me and I shall see if I can be of any service to you." Emboldened by Amir's friendly words, the young man proceeded to recite his narrative as follows—" My best friend ! I am a pilgrim of love. My ancestors are the inhabitants of the western country. My name is Sultan Bukht. I am the son of the king of the west. I have fallen a victim to the love of the daughter of the king of Yeman and it is that love which has reduced me to this condition. Destitute and forlorn, I am roving about the world in a Fakir's grab, abandoning my country, relations and friends. I have given up all my ease and comforts for the sake of the angel, whom I adore and whose contemplation is the only solace of my heart. Her acquisition depended on the fulfilment of certain conditions and as I found myself incapable of accomplishing them, I turned Fakir in utter despondency." "There is nothing in the world which a man cannot venture upon," answered Amir. "Pray compose yourself and let me know the conditions, which you have found beyond your power to fulfil. God is all-merciful and we must not despair of His kindness.

Rise up and accompany me. Nerve yourself and shake off your apathy and dejection. I will take up your cause and bring home to you the object of your heart."

Amir halted here that night and converted Sutan Bakht to Islam. The next day, when he returned to his tent, he desired the prince to be taken to the bath, and dressed in a princely style. Separate tents were then set apart for him and his attendants, and the prince began to live in comfort with Amir, who took special care of his happiness.

Amir now broke up the halt, and while he went on his journey, he came across a man whom he saw seated on a terrace wearing a cloak and hat of a tiger's skin, with a tiger fastened before him. Getting over to him, Amir asked him who he was, where he lived and why he kept a tiger fastened before him. "I am a highway robber," replied he, "my name is Towk-bin-Hyran. This wilderness is my abode for the present. I let loose my tiger on any traveller passing this way and when he is killed, I take possession of all his property, letting the tiger devour his flesh. The property thus acquired is disposed of, and the money gained, used for my comfort. "Perdition!" ejaculated Amir, "Abandon your nefarious profession and repent of your past sins. You have shed the blood of many innocent people that have fallen in your way, and you must now dread the vengeance of Heaven that surely awaits you." "I pity you for your youthful and captivating appearance," exclaimed the robber; "it is no use bandying fruitless words and risking your life for them; better take your way quietly and let me have your armour, dress and steed." "Hold your tongue," said Amir in angry defiance. "It is no use giving vent to irrational jabber. Let loose your tiger upon me and behold my insignificant valour." Hearing this, the robber set his tiger free, but no sooner did the ferocious beast spring upon Amir, than he lifted him up on the point of his spear and hurled him against the robber. The robber was astonished at Amir's strength, nevertheless he darted forth with his sword to cut him down. Amir gave him such a violent push with his lance, that he fell flat on his face. Amir dismounted from his steed and pulling him up by the neck, was about to knock him down, when the man craved for mercy which was granted. He was then converted to Islam and given the situation of flag-bearer in Amir's troops. When Amir reached within ten miles of the fort of Yeman, he selected

a delightful green meadow for his halt and directed his tents to be pitched there in order that he might refresh himself after the fatigue of the journey and get his troops organized. The order was immediately carried out, and the tents were pitched in a suitable place.

Meanwhile the men of Sohail's army that had been vanquished and dispersed by Amir returned to their royal master, Munzur Shah, and related to him all that had happened in their conflict with Amir, as well as, the fact of Sohail's embracing the faith of Islam. The king was inflamed with rage, and leaving his son, Noman, in charge of the fort with a small garrison of mounted soldiers, marched for Mecca with a fierce cavalry of thirty thousand horsemen. He could not, however, encounter Amir's force in the way as he took a different route, while the latter came by another.

Amir sent an emissary with an epistle to prince Noman demanding the hand of his sister Homaye Tajdar and asking at the same time the condition upon which her acquisition depended. Noman conveyed the errand to his sister, who replied petulantly in the following terms.—“Let the field be prepared at once: at day break, I shall have a game of ball with my aspirant, and if I succeed to carry the day, I shall have the man's head cut off and suspended from the parapet of my castle.” Noman wrote to Amir accordingly, adding that the acquisition of his sister's hand depended on his taking the field.

Amir was exceedingly rejoiced at the challenge and ordered the drums to be sounded. The beat of drums on both sides filled the air with the dismal sound of the approaching encounter. Amir spent the whole night in devotion invoking the help of God for the achievement of the victory. When the first glimmer of dawn shed its flickering beams on the battle-field, Noman sallied forth at the head of his troops, surrounded by his valliant chiefs; while on the other hand Amir clad in glittering armour, and with all the spirit of a gallant chieftain, vaulted into the saddle of his noble steed, Seak Kaitas, and galloped to the field with a lance in his hand, accompanied by his companions and friends, Towk-bin-Zarrin bearing the flag of war behind. The small body of soldiers, which Amir had under his command, presented a grand appearance on the field under the skilful arrangement made by Amir. Amir dashed his fiery steed backward and forward, turning and whirling frequently round, to give an

imposing appearance to the field of combat. The warriors were arrayed on both sides. Amir took up his position opposite to Noman and defied his rival to the encounter. At this time, a masked youth, who was no other man than Homaye Tajdar herself, galloped to the field. She was studded with jewels and bore a lance and sword in her hand. With a side-long glance towards Amir, she cried, "Where is the man who has ventured to aspire to the hand of the most illustrious Homaye Tajdar. Here is the field and here is the ball. Let him show his skill and carry off the ball."

No sooner was Amir challenged, than he urged his steed forward. The Ayar of Homaye Tajdar now cast the ball on the ground. Quick as lightening, she spurred her steed onward and was about to carry off the ball, when Amir dashing his charger with a whirl-wind speed, struck his bat against it. Finding the game out of her hand the lady threw up her veil mechanically to stupefy her rival with the lustre of her charms. When she saw that her stratagem had the desired effect, she reined in her steed a second time to carry off the ball, but Amir recovering himself instantly ejaculated, "Hold there, you wretched hypocrite! You cannot deceive me now. Your cunning is now fully exposed. You have duped others in this way and carried the field. You have now fallen in with a man, who is more skilful and valorous than yourself. I warn you that I will now take the ball from the field." With these menacing words, Amir tossed the ball out of the field and thus signally defeated the lady.

After this, Amir asked Homaye-Tajdar if she had any other wish to be fulfilled. She exclaimed that she would like to have another trial. Amir cast the ball to the ground at once and challenged her to the game. Nerving herself with fresh fortitude, she made another bold effort to carry the game, but quick as a clap of thunder, Amir darted forth and dashed the ball across the field with one tremendous stroke of his bat.

When Homaye-Tajdar saw herself thus utterly routed, she put spurs to her steed and was soon close to her brother's side. Amir urged his charger in pursuit of her, and catching hold of her by the waist-band tore her off from the steed and tossed her like a ball towards Amar, who instantly fastened her hands with the noose and hurried with her towards his troops.

The fall of Homoye Tajdar into the hands of Amir was

disgraceful enough to smite her brother. Noman with a fiendish rage. His blood ran like molten lead through his veins on his sister being thus snatched away. He turned towards his soldiers and addressed them in the following terms, "Brethren ! this youth has played an active part in over-powering my sister who is now entirely in his grasp. Let him not go out of your clutches. Never shall our family be branded with the loss of Homaye-Tajdar and it is for you to preserve its honor." Some ten thousand horsemen let loose their steeds and in a body assailed Amir from all sides. The martial blood of Amir was fomented with rage, and drawing his sword he dashed through the assailants with the impetuosity of a rushing storm, and in a short time left the field strewn with the dead and dying. He wielded his sword with the strength and courage of a Hercules, and went on cutting the army from flank to flank till the battle-field became a plat-form of the dead. Noman darted towards Amir with his drawn sword, but the latter receiving the sword-cut upon the back of his shield, pulled him lightly from his horse and hurled him against Amar like a feeble sparrow and he was soon made captive. The rest of his soldiers either deserted the field or fell under the sword of the valiant chief of *Islam*.

Triumphant and full of glory, Amir returned to his tent with the prisoners and ordered his victory to be proclaimed by bands of music. Arrangements for rejoicings were made. Noman was summoned by the Amir to his presence in the midst of merriment and asked if he had any further ambition to aspire to. "It was simply super-human courage," replied the prince with a drooping heart, "that crushed my braves, who could not otherwise have been discomfited by human beings. I cannot but embrace the faith of Islam and I submit to your orders with all my heart. Having converted the prince to Islam, Amir received him in his arms and offered him a seat by his side.

When the rejoicings terminated, Amir invested prince Noman and his sister Homaye-Tajdar, who had also accepted Islam, with valuable robes and told them to retire to their respective tents, he himself seeking his own for refreshment. The next morning Noman sent for his troops and invited them to accept the true faith of Islam and all of them accepted it with calm obedience. They were introduced to Amir and invested by him with robes according to their ranks.

When the news of the fall of his daughter into the hands of

Amir and other incidents resulting in his son and soldiers embracing Islam, reached the ears of Manzar Shah, he was almost maddened with rage and giving up his intention of invading Mecca, returned directly to his fort and ordered the drum of war to be sounded. When morning dawned, the armies of the rival parties were arrayed in the field of battle, and there was a regular thirst for war on both sides. With a terrific yell Manzar Shah galloped forward and defied Amir to a duel. "Who and where is Amir Hamza the chief of the troops?"—vociferated the king. "Let him come forward and show his face, his valour and the glare of his sword. He has perhaps never come in contact with any redoubtable warrior, and he must now see how he is amply punished!" "What nonsense do you dare vomit forth," ejaculated Amir defiantly; "should God grant, one stroke of my sword would be sufficient to decide the cause." Amir then challenged him to attack first, but no sooner did he wield his lance, than was Amir close upon his heels and dexterously snatching the spear away from his hand, lifted him up and was about to knock him down, when he implored mercy and was set free. He embraced Islam cheerfully and was treated by Amir with marked attention befitting his rank.

For one full month Amir was entertained by the king, who made every demonstration of loyalty towards him. Conformably to Amir's wishes, he made preparations for the alliance of his daughter with Sultan Bakht, but the latter wanted to have the wedding deferred till the marriage of Amir. This was agreed to, and after the usual ceremonies of betrothal, Homaye Tajdar was restored to her father, and Amir returned to Mecca with three thousand warriors to kiss the feet of his Sire. The king of Yemen accompanied him with his son to pay a visit to Kaaba, leaving behind a representative to look after his dominions during his absence.



CHAPTER XVI.

INVASION OF THE CITY OF MADAYEN BY HUSHAM, SON OF ALKAMAH.

ALKAMAH was an inhabitant of Khyber. He had a son by name Husham, who was of a daring spirit and lofty-minded. While in the prime of life and beginning to enjoy the vigor of his intellect, he liked to amuse himself one day in the neighbourhood of his house. Just as he had walked a few paces out of his house, he was startled by the uproarious noise of the market-people. On ascertaining the cause of disaffection, it appeared to him that the people of the king Nowsherawan were collecting rents from the shop-keepers, and those who were unable to meet their immediate demand were badly treated by them. Husham could hardly bear the ill-treatment of the market people at the hands of the collectors, and so getting some of them seized, turned them out from the place with their ears and nose ignominiously cut-off. Having done so, he sent peremptory orders to the shop-keepers not to let a farthing pass into the hands of any body, and directed them at the same time to pay all the rent to himself instead of to Nowsherawan. He then directed his attention to military equipments, and in the course of a short time, collected a formidable force with which, he marched for the city of Madayen.

When the fact of Husham's excursion to the city of Madayen reached the ears of the king Nowsherawan, he consulted Buzurchemehar on the subject. The wary minister advised the king not to meet the emergency himself, but let some of his deputies encounter the expedition. He said that if the king succeeded in defeating the enemy, it would add little to his fame; while on the other hand if the matter turned out adversely to him, he would be degraded in the eyes of his rivals, and the natural consequence would be that they would revolt and take up arms against him. He added that it seemed to him worth-while that the king should go on a shooting match before the arrival of Husham, leaving the town in charge of some of his commandants, who would chastise the aggressor in his absence. This would, he said, curb effectually the spirit of antagonism cherished by some

of the king's opponents, and then none would dare again to draw his neck from the yoke of submission.

The minister's foresight was appreciated by the king. He lost no time in proceeding on his shooting excursion. Antarfeel-gosh, who was renowned for his undaunted valour, was left behind in charge of the fort with a garrison of fifty thousand mounted soldiers. After a week, Husham came and besieged the city of Madayen, with a fierce cavalry of forty thousand horsemen. Antarfeel-gosh maintained his position firm, and kept back the enemy from approaching the entrenchment of the fort. With a shower of fire, which he poured down from the parapet of the castle, he made his opponents totter and stagger back.

While things went on in this way for several days, Antar was at last taken with an idea that, it did not savour of a gallant chieftain to play hide and seek, in order to avoid the onslaught of his enemy. He therefore made up his mind to meet the enemy face to face and give him a signal defeat, thus making himself deserving of a handsome reward at the hands of the king. With the resoluteness of purpose, which is the natural characteristic of brave men, he emerged from the town at the head of a cavalry consisting of five thousand horsemen to encounter his rival.

No sooner did Husham behold Antar appearing on the field to confront him than he burst into a fit of laughter and vociferated with a significant sneer,—“The angel of death is hovering over the head of this man, and it is the death alone that pushes him onward to confront me.” So saying, Husham brought up his rhinoceros in front of Antar and addressed him in angry defiance thus, “What is your object in coming forward to meet me? Why, are you bent upon exposing your life and shedding the blood of your troops?” “Despicable wretch!” ejaculated Antar, “Are you not an unfaithful apostate and a hereditary slave of my monarch and do you again pretend to gird your loins to disobey your royal master? The world is transitory and you ought not to prove disloyal to your sovereign, whose common slave can punish you sufficiently and blot out all your pomp and pride from the surface of the world.” “Inconsiderate man!” retorted Husham vehemently; “have you gone mad or are you raving in some blissful dream? Can ever a man like to stand in the position of a subordinate, while he intends to assume a sovereign power? By dint of my sword, I shall realize tribute

from your monarch and usurp all his treasure and dominions." No sooner did Husham utter these insolent expressions, than Antar thrust his lance into his rival's breast with such precision that it penetrated his lungs. Although Husham was severely wounded, he had courage enough to wield his sword. He responded to his rival's attack and cut him into two pieces. When Antar was killed, Husham fell upon his troops, which being without a head, gave way and deserted the field in a confused mass. Husham followed them with his army and on entering the town gave it up to plunder.

Having thus usurped the Crown and Throne of Nowshera-wan and taken the citizens as prisoners, Husham returned to his tent and gave himself up to merriment. In the morning he started for Khyber, and after making several journeys, came across a road, which branched off in two directions, one leading to Mecca and the other to Khyber. His followers advised him to march towards Mecca and destroy Kaaba, thereby acquitting himself of the most sacred act of his religion. Husham accepted the advice of his counsellors and set out for Mecca giving up his intention of returning to Khyber.

The news of Husham's advance towards Mecca with the intention of overthrowing the holy shrine of Kaaba spread like wild-fire. The idea of his indomitable power, and the devastation of the city of Madayen were sufficient to paralyze the horror-stricken people of Mecca. It was at this time that, Hamzah returned with his companions and soldiers after his glorious victory over the king of Yeman. After paying his visit to Kaaba, he proceeded straight to kiss his sire's feet. He was received in the affectionate arms of his noble father, Khajah Abdul Motullib, who distributed *sherbet* on this happy occasion and returning thanks to the Almighty for the safe return of Amir, gave free vent to his tears. Amir was confounded on finding his father so sad and weeping after the achievement of his glorious victory and asked the reason of his being melancholy. "My son!—My most beloved son!" exclaimed the Khajah with a mournful sigh, "how can I restrain the ebullition of any grief, when I behold a dreadful storm about to burst upon us. Husham, the son of Alkamah, is fast approaching to destroy Kaaba, after devastating the city of Madayen. The citizens of Mecca are alarmed, for he is a man of great valor, and has under his command a large body of blood-thirsty warriors, who contemplate a dreadful havoc on the city of Mecca. I therefore wish to send you

out to Africa with some excuse." "My venerable father," answered Amir with an air of dignified composure, "why should we be wailing before death overtakes us: my God is great and All-Omnipotent, and if I have your blessings, I will smash the fellow completely before he is able to make an inroad on Mecca. I therefore proceed post-haste to check the intruder's advance, and if God grants, I shall avert all impending evils at a finger's stroke.

With these words Amir left his father and proceeded to Kaaba. After saying his prayers and invoking the blessing of God for the successful issue of the expedition, he marched at the head of his valiant soldiers to arrest the progress of the aggressor. On went Amir galloping at full speed. When he arrived within two day's journey of Husham's army, he made a halt and began to organize his troops. At night-fall, he advanced at a rapid pace with several thousand of his picked battalions, and fell upon the enemy's force on a sudden, throwing it into complete disorder and deep consternation. With a cry of Allah-o-akber he challenged the people,—“You men in slumber. Rise up and look alive to the calamities that have overtaken you. The hand of the Angel of death is stretched over you, and it is time for you to be on the alert.” A general massacre ensued. Some ten thousand men of Husham's army were slain. Husham was himself sleeping in his tent, but when the cry of Allah-o-akber and the terrific din of battle was heard, he was startled from slumber. Springing to his feet he asked the cause of the tumult, and was informed by his men that an Arab by name Hamzah, had made a mid-night raid, and slain his soldiers. They said to him that if such blood-shed continued any longer, not a single individual of his army would survive the morrow.

Promptly did Husham spring upon his rhinoceros and urge it towards his troops; but ah! what a ghastly spectacle met his view. He found a number of his brave soldiers slain, mangled and mutilated, and those that survived were aghast and horror-stricken. The encamping ground had become the winding sheet of his immense army.

It was now clear day-light. Husham dashed his animal to the field. He still had about him some thirty thousand horsemen, who had survived the blood-shed; while Amir led under his command a cavalry of but ten thousand horsemen. With

mingled fury and indignation, he ejaculated addressing Amir in the following terms. "O child of Arab! whence have you brought your armour and steed? It is a pity that you have ventured to encounter me in your tender age regardless of your dear life. You have disturbed my troops quite unnecessarily, but I pity your youthful appearance, and will gladly excuse your fault, if you will make a present to me of your armour and steed. You have been guilty of gross impertinence and should you hesitate to comply, I will cut off your head with my sword, and you will get neither coffin nor grave." Amir was unable to bear the volley of his indignant expressions, and interjected in a fit of towering passion, "You accursed infidel! don't you know who I am and the family I belong to? I am the son of Khajah Abdul Motullib, and the grandson of Hashim. Has not the wide-spread report of the glare of my sword reached your ears and have you not heard the thundering uproar of my unflinching valour? Wretch! come to your senses and hold your tongue, which is too filthy for use." Incensed with rage, Husham darted his lance towards Amir, who warded off the blow and returned it with ten-fold fury. The lance-fighting continued for sometime, but when neither party was injured, Husham drew his sword from the sheath and attacked Amir with it. Amir snatched the sword away from his hand and with a cry of Allah-o-akber, assailed his opponent with such tremendous violence, that the blow cut the helmet, and passed through the head, neck and chest of Husham, cut off the saddle, and divided the rhinoceros into two.

When Husham thus fell, his troops gave way. With the ferocity of an excited lion, Amir dashed through the army, and in an instant left the field with heaps of dead and dying. Several persons took to their heels in the midst of the conflict, while others, who were taken prisoners and quietly accepted Islam, were spared. Amir took possession of the crown and throne of Nowsherawan, and sent an epistle through Mokbil informing the king of the victory over Husham, and asking him at the same time if he was to carry the throne and crown himself, or send through some body, whom the king ordered. The citizens of Madayen, who were taken prisoners, were released and sent back to their houses.

Having deputed Mokbil to Nowsherawan, Amir returned to Mecca triumphant and glorious, and kissed his Sire's feet

once more and paid homage to the holy shrine of Kaaba amidst the cheers and benedictions of the hopeful citizens. It is related that except on this occasion, Amir never made any night attack for the rest of his life.



CHAPTER XVII.

MOKBIL'S ARRIVAL AT MADAYEN WITH AMIR'S EPISTLE.

WHEN Nowsherawan returned to Madayen after the shooting match, he found the town plundered and pillaged by Husham. With tears in his eyes, he spoke to Buzurchemehur. "My dream has been realized so far. Let us see what more comes next." The minister consoled him and said. "Your lordship need have no cause for anxiety. It is the time now when your majesty is to be graced with a fresh laurel of glory, and that gaiety and cheerfulness will smile again in your dominion." The Sasanees, who had survived the massacre, or escaped falling into the hands of the enemy, bethought themselves of redressing their grievances at the hands of the king, and with this object in view, they repaired to Bakhtak and spoke to him thus:—"It is Buzurchemehur, sir, who has brought all these evils upon us, for had he not advised the king to leave the town at such a critical moment, it should have escaped plunder and devastation. It is he who has been the cause of shedding the blood of so many of our friends and relatives, and that in so doing he has doubtless given way to his religious prejudices and amused himself by ruining us as his adversaries in religion. We have therefore come to you to ask if you could plead our cause before his majesty, and procure us the redress we want."

While things went on thus, Sabir-namadposh, one of the king's Ayars, approached the king panting and full of dust to communicate to his royal master that Husham, who set everything at naught after his glorious victory over Madayen, had been killed by Amir Hamza, who had sent his head to the king through a friend of his, called Mokbil Wafadar, as a trophy of war, and having routed the whole of the enemy's troops, had taken back the crown and the throne of the king from him and restored to freedom all those taken as prisoners.

This happy turn of events made the king start from deep emotion of joy, which gushed up from the fountain of his heart. He held the minister in his arms and directed him to pro-

ceed with all his nobles to give a due reception to Mokbil. The order was immediately obeyed, and Mokbil was ushered into the king's presence with the respect and honour due to his rank. After kissing the king's throne, he placed with profound respect in the hand of the monarch the epistle he had brought. The king having perused the letter, handed it over to Buzurchemeher, and asked him to read its contents aloud and have them proclaimed over the length and breadth of his dominions. All the Sasanees and Kyanees * presented congratulatory addresses to the king for the glorious success which he had achieved against the enemy. Mokbil was lavished with treasure and precious jewels and was allowed free access to the king's court as long as he stayed within the walls of Madayen.

It is said that on the first day when Mokbil appeared before the king, the people saw a turtle-dove seated on one of the branches of the cypress tree in the garden attached to the king's court with a serpent coiled round her neck. This fact was brought to the king's notice, who said that the dove had come to demand justice and asked if there was any expert archer, who could shoot the snake without killing the bird. No one could venture to undertake such a delicate task, but Mokbil rising from his seat, asked His Majesty's permission to execute the order. This was immediately granted, and Mokbil fixed forthwith a looking glass at the point of a spear and placing it in the hand of a man directed him to keep it fixed without fear of attack before the face of the serpent. The stratagem adopted by Mokbil had a salutary effect, for when the snake saw one of its species in the looking glass, it lifted up its hood in angry defiance to dart against its rival. Mokbil availed himself of this opportunity and sent his arrow whizzing at the snake with such effect that it hit the reptile on the head and brought it to the ground. The turtle dove took to her wings and sought the shelter of her nest. The spectators rent the air with shouts of applause, while Mokbil was invested by the king, with another set of valuable robes.

After this, the king drew up a reply to Amir's epistle and handing it over to Bukhtak asked him to put a royal seal on the cover of the letter and send it forthwith to Amir through Bahman-Sagan and Bahman-Kharan along with a set of robes which he selected for him. It is said that the contents of the letter,

* Sasanees and Kyanees were the two tribes of the Fire-worshippers.

which the king wrote in reply to Amir's epistle, were to the following effect, viz. "Veteran of the world and the killer of rebels! You have done much to signify a faithful response to my paternal attachment to yourself. The cup of my enemy was brimful with arrogance and conceit and it was your daring alone which humbled it to the dust. In fact if heroes like Rustam and Nareeman were on the earth this day, they would surely have bowed their heads before your prowess, nor would Sohrab and Asfandiyar pride themselves on their bravery. I have sent to you Bahman Sagan and Bahman-Kharan with a set of robes, which you may accept as a present from your monarch, and after sending through a man the crown and throne, which you have so gallantly snatched from the enemy's hands, you may come over here to see me and thereby afford me the delight of a personal interview.

The vicious minister instead of sending the king's letter as it was, altered its contents and wrote in the following terms, 'O' Arab! my intention was to kill the Arabs first, so as to extirpate from the surface of the earth the descendants of Bani Hashim, but as you have acquitted yourself well in your conflict with Husham, I excuse your fault. I am, however, sending you a set of robes, which you may put on as a gift for the service you have done."

It is related that midway between Mecca, and the place where Amir was confronted by Husham, there lived a hero by name Adi Karab, who occupied a solitary fort, called Tung-i-Rawahil, from a long time past, and used to spend the whole of his time in that secluded fort. On hearing of Husham's victory over Madayen and his advance towards the city of Mecca, he had retreated within the recess of a mountain with a cavalry of eight thousand horsemen and secreted himself there with the view that when Husham would pass by that way, he would take him by surprise and throw his soldiers into complete disorder.

While Adi Karab was occupying this position, one of his Ayars brought to him the news that Husham had fallen under the sword of Amir, who was returning with all his treasure and effects towards the city of Mecca, his native place. "I would surely have my half share of the booty from Hamza," said Adi to his Ayar, "and if he hesitated to give, I would fight him for it." When Amir approached the fort of Tung-i-

Rawahil by gradual marches and alighted in its vicinity to refresh himself after the fatigue of the journey, Adi sent one of his chiefs to speak to him that he had been lying in wait for Husham, who was his prey, but as he had fallen in battle, he should get half the share of the booty, a refusal being met with the forfeiture of the whole of the plunder. Amir laughed heartily at the nature of the errand and after treating the emissary sent by Adi Karab, asked him to speak to his master that, if he came up as a friend, he would be received with embraces, but if he wanted to fight, he was prepared to meet him at all hazards. The emissary after conveying Amir's reply to Adi Karab, proceeded as follows;—"I have never seen a chief of such agreeable manners and amiable disposition as Amir Hamza, who is a valiant chieftain of good address, and tender feeling. It is not astonishing that in the course of time his supremacy will spread far and wide, and the banner of his glory will be floating on the pinnacle of fame.

Hearing this, Adi prepared himself for war and advanced to the field of battle with his soldiers; while, on the other hand, Amir appeared on the field, on his noble steed in the midst of his heroes and warriors to encounter his rival. Adi, properly known as Madi Karab, was a man of unwieldy corpulence and disproportionately fat and fleshy. In person he was as broad as he was tall. Clad in armour to the very teeth and having a huge helmet on the head, he looked a veritable giant sufficient to terrify any one, to say nothing of the spectators. He had a sword, dagger and arrow slung on his back; while in his right-hand he carried a sharp pointed spear as heavy as a log. "You were very proud of your strength," said Amar to Amir with a sneering jest, "but it is time for you to try it against a giant, who has appeared in human shape." "The One who has given me strength is All-Omnipotent," answered Amir, "and I consider my rival as chaff before the wind in spite of his bulk and gigantic exterior."

With the name of God on his lips, Amir urged his charger against his rival regardless of the disparity of the conflict with a monster, and bringing his horse beside Adi's steed, gave that animal such a violent push on the head with the back of his shield, that it staggered back some paces and dashed its head vehemently. When Adi saw that Amir was gifted with supernatural powers, and was not a man to be easily daunted, he addressed him as follows:—Young

man! You appear to be a youth of prodigious valour and endowed with extraordinary manliness of spirit. I must therefore know your name and designation that you may not fall under my sword nameless." "Don't you know, O' man," retorted Amir coldly, "that a hero's name is always engraved upon the hilt of his sword; but if you wish to know me more explicitly, let it be known to you once for all that my well-known appellation is Abul Ula. I am a descendent of Bani Hashim, and my native land is Mecca. I have come to try your skill, power and strength, and I challenge you to use your weapons against me." Adi took up his heavy war-club and assailed Amir with it. The latter warded off the blow dexterously and allowed his rival the option of assailing him once more, before he used his sword against him.

When Adi found Amir had escaped the tremendous blow of his heavy war-club he flew into a rage, and drawing his sword from its sheath, darted towards him with the ferocity of a provoked monster and just as he was about to strike Amir with it on the head, the latter seized the hilt of his sword with one hand, and caught hold of his waist-band with the other. Adi did the same, so that, both the gallants began to measure their strength one against the other.

While the two heroes were thus engaged, Amar approached them and said :—"Braves! Why in trying your strength are you killing your steeds, who are no more than poor dumb creatures? If you are so fond of wrestling, you had better come down from your steeds and try your strength on the ground. Both Amir and Adi accepted Amar's advice, and when they got off their steeds, it was agreed that the vanquished would submit to the vanquisher, and on this understanding Amir sat down upon his hips cross-legged and asked Adi to pull him up. Adi brought his whole strength to bear, but he could not move Amir from the place where he sat, although he perspired from every root of his hair. When Adi failed to lift Amir, he sat down discomfited, and said "Hamzah, I have exhausted all my strength without success; it is now your turn to try your strength against me." Amir rose and with one violent jerk pulled Adi up from the ground. After wheeling him several times round his head, Amir asked him what more he wanted to be done with him. Adi meekly submitted to Amir's indomitable power and was lightly put down. He prostrated himself at the feet of Amir and embraced the faith of Islam. After this, he conducted Amir

with all his troops to his fort, *Tungi Rawahil*, and gave a princely entertainment to that noble champion of moslem faith. He introduced Amir to all his relatives, each of whom was courteously treated by him and invested with suitable robes.

When the rejoicings terminated, Amir expressed his intention of leaving the place and returning to Mecca to kiss his Sire's feet. Adi was chagrined on his separation from Amir and said, "Hamzah, I am not so big-bellied that you cannot afford to provide me with food. Why then do you not take me with you? If you fix a few maunds of grain for my daily ration, I shall manage by restricting myself to one meal a day." "Good God," interjected Amar, "Madi Karab has surely no natural appetite, he lives upon so limited a ration that it is hardly sufficient to maintain him. In fact to keep a man of such a poor diet is no burden to any body." Amir laughed out merrily at Amar's significant jest and said, "We need not be anxious for our bread, since God provides for all." In short Adi's wishes were cheerfully complied with and he accompanied Amir to Mecca with eighteen thousand cavalry.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURN OF AMIR TO MECCA AND HIS RECEIVING THE EPISTLE OF NOWSHERAWAN.

ON his return to Mecca, Amir first visited Kaaba to offer prayers for the successful issue of two battles and converted Adi to Islam after getting him to swear against leading a life of depredation and then proceeded homewards to kiss his Sire's feet. No sooner was Khaja Abdul Motullib informed of Amir's return, than he advanced with all his kindreds and citizens of Mecca to clasp him to his arms. In the way both the father and the son met each other. Amir prostrated and kissed his father's feet, who raised him from the suppliant posture and pressed him to his breast. Alms were given and gold and silver showered in abundance upon Amir. The citizens, gentry and nobility of the town blessed Amir for the great victories he had won and the mighty chiefs he had subdued.

When Amir came to his house, he held a court in which he introduced to his father and the citizens of Mecca all his warriors and champions, giving a short description of the personal qualifications of each. The Khaja was infinitely pleased with them and treated each with the utmost kindness. It transpired one day in the course of conversation that Adi was the son of Adya Bano, and Amir was exceedingly pleased to find in him his foster-brother. Adi was therefore raised to the position of a commandant and made the advance guard of Amir's troops, as well as, the Superintendent of Dewan Khana,* Furaash khana† and Nakár-khana‡.

After a few days Amir was informed that the emissaries sent by Nowsherawan were coming to him with a reply to his letter and a set of robes. He proceeded with his father and all

* Court house.

† Room for the preservation of Carpet &c.

‡ Place reserved for sounding drums.

his *Sirdars* to receive them, and they were conducted to the town with due respect. A well-furnished room was allotted to them for their accommodation, and no pains were spared to give them a suitable banquet. When the king's letter and robes were presented to Amir, he was deeply mortified on reading its contents, which were too arrogant and failed to touch the delicate chord of his noble heart. The Khaja noticed the change in Amir's complexion, and on ascertaining the cause of his uneasiness, consoled him and said that he must not be displeased with the tone of the epistle, for it is the nature of a king's disposition once to frown on salutation, and then to give robes to his accusers.

The next day, when the emissaries were invited to dinner along with the citizens of the town, the king's letter was read to the audience, and all were astounded at his ungrateful treatment. Amar was the more incensed. He was even offended with Amir on his kind treatment of the bearers of a scandalous letter. The dishes of viands being arranged, Amar brought two of his own trays tightly covered with a piece of cloth. Amir did not relish his conduct, which, he well understood, was full of tricks, but Amar was implacable and nothing would prevent him following his own whims. He placed the two trays before the king's emissaries with the utmost delicacy, and told them that they served to form a part of his own entertainment.

The coverings of the trays being removed, Amar picked up two dishes, one containing grass and the other the decomposed bones of a corpse. The former he placed before Bahman Kharan* and the latter before Bahman Sagan.* All present were surprised at Amar's conduct, and asked him the reason of it. "The grass," said he, is a suitable diet for an ass and the bones are most tasteful to a dog and as I found^d it my duty to give a treat to the King's emissaries, I have brought for them the choicest food I could find. Both these men gnashed their teeth against Amar, but finding it out of place to utter a word, held their peace. When the dinner was over, Amar brought two sets of robes in trays, one of which was an embroidered pack-saddle, which he put on the shoulder of Bahman Kharan, while the other was a brocade-covering for a dog, which he placed on the back of Bahman Sagan. This was adding

* These terms signify ass and dogs in Persian.

fuel to the fire, so that, both of them lost their temper, and drawing their scimitars from the scabbards darted at Amar. Towk-bin-Hyan snatched the weapons from their hands and with a few smart blows quieted them. Both these fellows took to their heels in utter consternation, and returned to their king to represent to him the unfortunate incident. In the meantime, Amir wrote a letter to the king to the following effect. "I expected from your Majesty some appreciation of the services rendered by me at the sacrifice of my life; but instead of this, your Majesty has made a very bad return by sending me a letter and a set of miserable robes, which indicate your Majesty's indignation and resentment." This letter he sent along with the king's gift and epistle through Mokbil.

On their return to Madayen, with all imaginable wailings and lamentations, the emissaries related to the king their sad episode ornamenting the tale with a variety of epithets. The king was blanched with rage, and darting his eyes towards Buzurchemehar, asked him the reason of it all. "This Arab," said the king, "appears to be too headstrong and arrogant, and from what the emissaries have reported to me, it is manifest that he is meditating mischief against my dominions". "My august monarch," replied the minister calmly, "Hamza is a man of undoubted worth with a magnanimous heart. In moral virtues, affability of temper, politeness of manners and in all good and tender feelings, he has no equal on the face of the earth. He is brave, of keen sentiment and equally wise and prudent to grace his position of a noble chieftain. If there is any tinge of truth in the statement of your majesty's emissaries, I am afraid something has gone wrong in the way that has led to such distasteful consequences. While matters went on thus, Mokbil appeared before the king with the Amir's epistle and presented him with the set of robes and the letter sent to him through Bahman Kharan and Bahman Sagan. On perusing Amir's letter, the king was exasperated at Bukhtak's wickedness and after censuring and fining him heavily turned him out, and commanded him not to enter the court for some time. After this, he wrote a letter of apology to Amir in the following terms. "The letter and robes sent you were not from me, but from my wicked minister, who tampered with the former and changed the latter maliciously on the way. For all this, he has been sufficiently punished, and I trust you will bury the past in oblivion. To avoid further machinations on the part of the evil-disposed minister, I am sending you the letter,

with another set of valuable robes, through Buzurg Umed, son of Buzur-chemehar, and hope you will lose no time in starting for Madayen with the crown and throne, which I shall be glad to receive from your own hands." The king handed over the letter to Buzurchemehar and directed him to send it to Amir through his son, as carefully as possible, and without loss of time. The minister took his leave and engaged himself in the preparations for the journey to Mecca. The Khaja caused a flag of enchantment to be made for Amir, which was named, *Alam-i-azdahā Pyker*, or the dragon of war. To be efficacious in over-awing its rival, it used to repeat the words, *O Saheb kiran*, as often as it was blown by the wind. He also sent a tent belonging to the prophet Daniel. As for Amar, he entrusted Buzurg Umed with several dresses to be used in practising the feats of an *ayar*, and instructed him how to dress him. This done, the Khaja let his son depart under a strong escort of horse.

When Khaja Buzurg Umed was within eight miles of the city of Mecca, he alighted at a certain place with all his retainers. By chance Amar had been out that day in the same direction to take his running exercise. Buzurg Umed could make him out by his appearance and calling him near to himself embraced him tenderly. "We are both brothers," spoke the Khaja at last to Amar, "come and stop with me for a short time to receive some gifts, which I have brought for you from my father. I have a suit of clothes, which my father has sent you to be used as a garb for playing practical tricks. Pray therefore take off your country suit, that I may dress you in my own." Amar quite pleased complied with the Khaja's offer, but as soon as this was done, the Khaja ordered his suit to be taken away, thus leaving Amar in a state better imagined than described. Amar was distracted and ashamed and began weeping and beseeching for his clothes. Buzurg Umed laughed outright at Amar's sad predicament and said. "My friend ! I have undressed you today, because you will in the long run strip thousands of others of their dresses. My treatment of you is to teach you not to do to others what you would not that they should do to you, and that you may remember this lesson for the rest of your life." Amar offered himself to be the disciple of Khaja Buzurg Umed, who there-upon sent for the new robes he had brought for him and dressed him. Amar was also presented with several nooses, scaling ladders, a sling; a false beard and such other things in use for practising artifices, and instructed him in all of them. Taking

leave of Khaja Buzurg Umed, Amar proceeded direct to Amir in his new dress, and related to him all that had happened. He said that the king Nowsherawan had sent him a letter of apology in reply to his own, together with a set of valuable robes and other presents through Buzurg Umed, the son of Buzuchemehar, who was encamped at a short distance from the city gate. Amir was rejoiced at the happy news, and with all his companions and troops rode out to receive him. The latter treated Amir with the decorum of paternal superiority, and presented him with the king's letter and the set of robes he had brought for him. Amir was happy on reading the contents of the letter and gladly put on some of the dresses sent by the king. Buzurg Umed then presented Amir with the flag and the tent, which he had brought from his father. and he was overjoyed with the presents, and returning thanks to Khaja Buzurchemehar made them over to his chieftains.

After this, Amir returned to Mecca with Khaja Buzurg Umed, whom he introduced to his father, Khaja Abdul Motulib, and to some other citizens of the town. The Khaja remained as the guest of Amir for several days, and in the course of the entertainments reminded him one day of the king's anxiety to see him, and asked him to prepare for his journey to Madayen. Amir at once took leave of his father, and after paying a visit to Kaaba, started for Madayen with his chiefs, and a fierce body of thirty thousand horsemen. He proceeded by daily marches till he came across a road branching off in two directions. Amir asked the Khajah as to where the two roads led and was told in reply that both led to Madyen. The Khaja said that one of them was free from danger, but the journey was long and tedious, taking not less than six months to reach Madayen, but the other route though shorter, was not frequented by travellers for the past five years, because it was haunted by a huge man-eating lion. The last words had scarcely been uttered when Amir expressed his determination to take the latter road in order to destroy the beast, or to frighten it away from the path. Accordingly he proceeded on his way accompanied by Amar alone, having previously directed his troops and companions to march on to Madayen by the safer road along with Khaja Buzurg Umed.

On the second day, Amir arrived at the place supposed to be the abode of the beast and delighted by the soft inviting breeze, alighted from his steed on the bank of a rivulet, in which flowed

sweet crystal water; and as it was a picturesque place, he sat down on the covering of the saddle, while Amar grazed his steed.

Shortly after, there was a rustling in the forest; and the next instant the lion appeared face to face. Amar, who had never seen a lion before, let the horse go in fright, and climbing up a tall tree, cried, "Amir! a very big and terrible beast has just emerged from the forest, and is making its way towards you. Leave your place and join me at-once, or get up on some tree nearer you." Amir laughed at Amar's bewilderment and told him take courage. He said he had selected this dangerous road purposely to destroy the beast and nothing would daunt him in meeting it.

So saying, Amir proceeded towards the monster, which was indeed very big and frightful, and stepping forward a few paces, challenged it to the encounter. Hearing Amir's challenge, the lion uttering a terrific roar sprang at him, but Amir evaded the onset, and with the cry of *Allah-o-akber* caught hold of the animal by one of his hind legs and with one violent jerk dashed it down breaking the spine.

The animal groaned and died in a few minutes. Seeing it was dead, Amar came down from the tree and kissed Amir's hands. The next morning he skinned and stuffed the beast with dry straw. He then put it over the shoulders of a man and took it to Madayen. Considering the long circuitous route his troops had taken to reach Madayen, Amir made occasional halts in pretty and delightful meadows for the purpose of hunting, so as to reach his destination at the same time with Khaja Buzurg Umed.

On reaching Madayen, Amir went to his troops, while Amar placed the stuffed lion quietly on the top of a hillock below the fort-wall, in such a posture as to represent the living beast. The next morning, when the city gate was opened, the grass-cutters went to the hillock as usual for grass. The attention of one of them was casually drawn to the animal, when with a shriek he fell senseless to the ground. His companions were startled by the noise, and looking at the animal fled pell mell towards the town crying, "lion," "lion," "lion." The news was spread like wild-fire, and every individual was instantly on the alert. The matter was at last brought to the king's notice, who repaired

forthwith to the principal tower of the fort with his nobles and chiefs, and looked at the beast with considerable amazement. Meanwhile, Mokbil happening to come out of his tent to see the king, came across the lion; he fixed an arrow to his bow and proceeded towards it. Drawing near to the beast, he found it motionless, when he discovered what it was, and instantly ascribed the stratagem to Amar's trickery. He was soon persuaded with the belief that the lion had been killed by Amir on his way to Madayen, and Amar having skinned and stuffed it, had played this trick in order to frighten the people. He therefore repaired to the king forthwith and exposed the trick. The King's curiosity was satisfied, and Mokbil was handsomely rewarded.

The king then directed Mokbil to go and find out where Amir was encamped, and to send him prompt intimation of it. Mokbil accordingly proceeded in quest of Amir, but casually found Amar coming towards the town. He asked Amar where Amir was encamped. Amar did not relish to be addressed by his friend so abruptly without the exchange of usual salutations and embraces, and instead of giving a suitable reply asked him in return, "O black faced man! why are you lounging about the streets? Have you not been sent by Amir to attend on the king?" "I have just been informed," answered Mokbil, "that Amir has come here, and is encamped somewhere out of the city gate. I am therefore going to pay him my respects. I have no mind to go on amusing myself, but am coming from the king's presence to look for my master". "You have not done well," said Amar impudently, "in seeking Amir's presence". "Have you gone mad," exclaimed Mokbil, "that you attempt to hold me at defiance." Amar, who was only looking for an opportunity to pick a quarrel with Mokbil, vociferated petulantly, "O man of base origin, do you venture to apply so indecent a term to me? Is your brain puffed up with conceit by receiving three boxes of gold mohurs from Nowsherawan?" So saying, he pulled out a sling from his *Neem-taj** and adjusting a sharp stone, whirled it several times round his head and flung it at Mokbil with such precision that it struck him on the forehead causing the blood to flow in torrents from the wound. Mokbil went to Amir in this condition, and began weeping and complaining against Amar. Amir sent for Amar and asked him to explain his conduct. He said in reply that to go to a

* A sort of long-slanting cap just as used by Moguls.

tribunal alone and win his favour was no wise policy. "I must be listened to, before any blame is attached to me. A man in a foreign land has great expectations, but it is a pity that on my interview with Mokbil after so long a time, he did not exchange salutations with me, nor embraced me when he first saw me. Is this not against the doctrine of true Islam, and opposed to the laws of etiquette? Before you, we stand on the same level, and you recognise no distinction between us. How would you regard the man, who rejected the friendly tenderness of another by turning away from him when about to be embraced? Directly I saw Mokbil coming, I stopped to embrace him, but instead of advancing to salute, he merely accosted me, and that most unceremoniously like a stranger in fact. Of course, I told him jestingly, O black faced man! has Amir sent you to attend on the king, or to go on amusing errands. I said you are doing very wrong to spend your time in lounging about the roads for nothing. My words received a very disagreeable retort, and I lost temper and dealt him a blow. I now refer the matter to your calm and patient consideration, and hope for justice. This is not all, he has received a rich set of robes from the king, besides three boxes of gold mohurs, and this is the reason why his brains are swimming with conceit and arrogance."

After hearing Amar's story, Amir laid the blame on Mokbil for his neglect and for attempting to estrange himself from his friend: he accordingly commanded them to let bygones be bygones and to be mutually reconciled. Mokbil stepped forward to receive Amar in his arms, but the latter declined, saying that he being a poor man of humble position could by no means pretend equality with one gifted with both wealth and dignity. Mokbil found that Amar would not come to terms without sharing in the money he had received from the king, he therefore offered him a box of gold mohurs, and thus the difference was settled. Amar was exceedingly avaricious, and the inducement was enough to effect a compromise.

The next day, Khaja Buzurg Umed appeared before the King, and related to him all about his journey to Mecca and his interview with Amir. The king was rejoiced at the account and in consultation with his minister, Khaja Buzurchemeher, expressed a desire to proceed to Amir's reception. Bakhtak was worked up by the Sasanis to deter the king from his kind intention, because of his sovereign power and the other's lowly position; but

the king followed Buzurchemeher's advice and proceeded to receive Amir with all the grandeur and magnificence becoming his position.

The king had not been more than four miles from the town, when a dark cloud of dust arose before him. The wind having cleared the dust, Amir appeared full of majesty and glory under his enchanted flag, riding on his noble steed, *Syah Kaitas*. He was in the midst of thirty thousand mounted soldiers, and his valiant chiefs and companions, all armed to the teeth and attired in their proper uniforms. No sooner was the king seen coming, than Amir dismounted from his steed and carried over his head the throne and crown he had taken back from Husham to present to his majesty. The king was gratified at Amir's conduct, and received him affectionately in his arms.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENTRY OF AMIR INTO THE CITY OF MODAYEN, AND HIS OCCUPYING THE SEAT OF RUSTOM.

THE next day Khaja Buzurchemeher introduced Amar to the king, and spoke to his Majesty about his many and excellent qualities. As a mark of kindness, the king offered Amar his feet to kiss, and the latter in kissing the king's feet slowly and unperceived pulled out a ring from one of his Majesty's toes. After this, he began embracing each sirdar and noble, one by one; when his turn came to embrace Bukhtak, he cleverly dropped the ring into his pocket.

The king then rode back to the city with Amir and his companions. Amar went on regaling him with all his tricks and pleasantries. Mehter Atash, the chief of the *Ayars* attending Nowsherawan's Court, became jealous of the favour shown to Amar, and unable to restrain his passion, exclaimed vehemently, "O young fellow, it is yet time for you to learn. You must not attend the king while I am present, keep yourself within proper bounds, and do not forget your humble lot." "In the first place," retorted Amar coldly, "You are old and I am young and stronger than yourself; next, you were formerly the only *Ayar* in the king's Court; I have now come to be your rival. You should not, as a matter of course, go in advance of me, and profess to be the leader. It is now time for you to retire on some assignment from the king, and leave the office for me." Mehter Atash boiled with rage at Amar's sarcasm, and began speaking insolently to him. The confusion attracted the king's notice, who asked the cause of the disagreement. Mehter Atash addressing the king said, "Mighty lord, I am your Majesty's old slave and the chief of all the *Ayars* attached to your Majesty's Court. From you, and at this Court, have I obtained all honour and distinction, but this young prig pretending to be an *Ayar* does not allow me to attend on your Majesty." The king asked for an explanation, and Amar proceeded as follows, "My lord, an *Ayar's* feats should not be hidden, but publicly displayed. Let Mehter Atash run a

race with me, and he who outstrips the other must carry the day." The king accepted Amar's proposal and decided that both should run a race up to the city gate, which lay about two *farsangs* from the place, each with an arrow in his hand, and he who would deliver his arrow first to the gate-keeper, would be the winner. Both agreed to the terms, and started for the city gate. They ran abreast for a while, but after going some distance, Amar lagged a little behind, though intentionally, letting Atash proceed a mile ahead. Just as he was about to reach the city gate, Amar flew with the swiftness of the carrier, and making over the arrow to the gate-keeper, retraced his steps, and kicked his rival so violently on the back that he fell flat on the ground, and blood oozed from his head from the effects of the fall. Amar returned to the king and kissing his Majesty's stirrup, showed him the *Nimtaj* of Atash, which he had taken from him, as a token of success. Atash in his disgrace did not appear to the king, but went straight to his house to heal his wound.

When the king arrived at the city gate, he ordered Amir's troops to be encamped at *Tilshadkam*, (a delightful field outside the *Fort*); Amir's tents were accordingly pitched on the banks of a river flowing beside the field, his troops taking up their posts according to their respective ranks; while Amir entered the city with the king. They found every street, shop and house tastefully decorated. People ran in crowds to welcome the hero within the city walls, and a thousand grateful voices hymned his praises and offered benedictions on the glorious victory. Rejoicings and festivities marked the day, and Amir commemorated the occasion by the release of the state prisoners.

On entering the King's Court, the champions of *Islam* were offered seats to the right, and others to the left of the throne. Amir was asked by the king to select his own place and after some hesitation, he seated himself on the envied chair of the hero Rustam. This was keenly felt by the *Sasanis*, who did not like Amir's occupying so exalted a position; they, however, preferred silence that day, but vowed to avenge themselves the next morning.

The king showered several trays of gold mohurs upon Amir, who in his turn offered presents to his Majesty. Amir and his *Sirdars* were each presented with a tumbler of *Sherbet*, which being done, the choicest of delicacies were served up, which Amir partook

of with his friends and companions. After dinner he was entertained with music and dancing, and goblets of wine went freely round. In the midst of revelry, Amar took up his Dotara *and accompanying with it sang a melodious song, which thrilled and melted the hearts of his hearers. The king enraptured, determined to offer him one of his rings as a reward, but lo! the particular ring was missing. Amar took advantage of the king's trouble, and rising from his seat, asked His Majesty's permission to make a search for the ring, stating that it could not have gone out of the Court. Amar was ordered to find the ring, whereupon he made a search among his own men and companions, but without success. The king then directed Khaja Buzurchemehar to look for the ring among his nobles; the minister carried out the King's order, but when his turn came to search Bukhtak, the ring was found in his pocket. The whole assemblage of persons were amazed and horrified. Bukhtak was disgraced and lowered in the eyes of the spectators, but had nothing to say as to how the ring came to be found in his pocket. Amar found this a fair opportunity to damn the unhappy minister and with his hands folded, ejaculated in a loud and triumphant voice, "My friends, we have heard of *Ayar's* thieving and stooping to such base conduct, but now we have an instance of a minister stealing his own king and master's ring. If Bukhtak had attempted to rob the king of a large hoard of treasure, the matter would have been somewhat different, but to trifle with an insignificant thing like a ring is nothing save the meanest form of dishonesty which ought not be tolerated for a moment. Bukhtak has besides made a good fortune through the king's favor, and it shows the baseness of his ingratitude, and his unfitness to continue longer in his ministerial chair." The king abused and reproached Bukhtak in open court for his misbehaviour, but Amar disapproving of this manner of treatment, exclaimed, "My lord, a chastisement like this, is not suited to a thief. His hands should be severed from his body, which is the only punishment enjoined by law for such persons. Bukhtak was a little troubled at Amar's menacing words, but he was excused further punishment through the intercession of Buzurchemehar. He was, however, ordered to be turned out of the court, but Amir pleaded on his behalf, representing to the king his innocence and Amar's trick in the affair. The king marvelled at Amar's dexterity in pulling out the ring from his toe and then dropping it quietly into the pocket of Bukhtak; he therefore restored

* A kind of guitar with a couple of strings to play upon.

the wretched minister to his favor and position. The entertainment being over, Amir returned to his tent at *Talshadkam*, but was ordered to attend the court daily with all his *Sirdars* and companions.

When Amar returned to *Talshadkam* with Amir, he received a letter from Bukhtak, along with a sum of money and a promissary handnote for a further sum, asking him not to molest him in open court in the way he had done, nor to try to seek his disgrace before the *Sasanis*, among whom he held a respectable position. On receipt of this letter and money, Amar was transported with joy and chuckled within himself at the prospect of receiving something more from him.

The next day, when Amir, as usual, repaired to the king's court with all his companions and seated himself on the chair of Rustam, the *Sasanis* lost patience and made up their minds to degrade Amir in the eyes of the king. One day, therefore, as Amir had entered the king's Court and taken his usual seat, a young man, clad in armour, appeared at the court, and casting a savage glance at Amir represented to the king as follows, "My august monarch, is it not a piece of gross injustice and a downright insult to ourselves to let this Arab occupy the seat of Rustam? My father, who had the honor of holding this place in your Royal Court and who had been sent by your Majesty to the China expedition, is now returning, and to be sure will make this Arab feel for his pretension in occupying so exalted a seat. Amir, who could hardly bear the reproach, asked the king who he was and whence he had come. "The name of this gentleman is Fowlad," answered the monarch; "he is the son of Gustaham, one of my chiefs, whom I have sent to chastise and overthrow Bahram Gurd, the king of China, who has rebelled against me. The king is now a prisoner and Gustaham is returning to the kingdom with his captive. Fowlad does not like to see you seated on his father's chair, and hence his grumblings." "It would be well," exclaimed Amir, "if the claim to this seat of honour is decided between his father and myself by the exercise of some feats of strength, and that the vanquished should submit to the vanquisher." Fowlad was inflamed with rage at Amir's words, and retorted coldly. "O Arab, before you venture to measure your strength with my father, try your chance with me. Let us therefore try *panja* or a struggle of the fingers, and if you succeed in overpowering me in this, you may then measure your powers against the indomitable

strength of my father". "*Bismillah*," said Amir exultingly, and taking his seat close to Fowlad commenced wrestling in the manner proposed. In a moment he was overthrown, and when defeated, ran at Amir with his drawn sword with the fury of a demon, but the latter snatched the weapon and pushed him aside. Hurmuz, the king's son, remonstrated with Fowlad for creating a disturbance in his father's court, and directed him to hold his peace and avoid further disgrace. Fowlad resumed his seat by the side of Hurmuz and the king dismissed the court with some excuse.

After a few days, the king was informed that Gustaham had arrived, with Bahram Gurd, the king of China, and four thousand picked soldiers, who had been taken prisoners, and was encamped about eight miles from the city awaiting the king's orders. As the king had proceeded ere this to receive Amir within the city wall on the occasion of his arrival at Madayen, it was now Bukhtak's turn to work against him by inducing the king to proceed to the reception of Gustaham and to show that the king did no exceptional honor to Amir in going out to receive him. He succeeded in influencing the king, and led him out of the city gate to receive Gustaham. On the way Buzurchemehar advised the king to take Amir with him, and His Majesty sent word to Amir to attend him with his retinue and nobles. But the king had not been two miles out of the city gate, when Gustaham appeared on his steed with an air of pride depicted on his face. The *Sasanis* rejoiced at the idea that he would now subvert Amir, and saw in Gustaham's timely arrival the hand of heaven stretched out to mitigate their anxieties and banish their distress.

On approaching the king, Gustaham dismounted from his steed, kissed his feet and then narrated his adventures with all imaginable exaggerations calculated to heighten his glory. The king thanked his idol-gods and returned to the city. Gustaham did not accompany the king, but followed him at a little distance. On his way back the king found Amir coming in accordance with his wishes. He requested Amir to meet Gustaham, and Amir signified his assent to carry out the king's wishes.

Gustaham lagged behind at the request of Bukhtak, whose object was to set him against Amir, and to instruct him how to treat Amir when they met each other. He therefore spoke to

Gustaham thus,—“Gustaham, this Arab is so conceited, thinks so much of his bravery, that he would scatter to the winds every one who happened to come before him. He did not mind taking your seat in the king's court, nor did he care to throw your son to the ground in open court. He is extremely presumptuous, and would set at naught everything to secure his own end. It is fortunate that you have arrived in time to bring him to his senses. Would you therefore follow my advice and do what I propose? I wish you to press him hard while he comes to embrace you, so much so, that his ribs might crack, and he may have an idea of your strength before-hand, and may not attempt to boast of his powers in your presence and before the king. Gustaham nodded assent and bided the time when he would meet Amir.

While things went on thus, Amir arrived on his noble courser. Gustaham advanced to meet him, who, on the other hand, dismounted from his steed and proceeded to receive him in his arms. Gustaham and Amir enfolded each other. As previously arranged, Gustaham, while embracing Amir, pressed him with all his might, but it told little on him. Amir returned the warm embrace, and Gustaham perspired at the very roots of his hair. Gustaham after making excuses, started for the city with his troops, leaving Amir to promenade on the meadow.

On a sudden, Amir's attention was attracted to a coffin coming towards him in charge of four thousand mounted soldiers. Amir asked the men who it was that had died, and he was informed that Bahram Gurd, the king of China, was being carried immured in that box by the order of Gustaham. Amir was moved to find a hero thus confined, and immediately ordered his men to take down the coffin and open it. The box being opened, he found a man in the bloom of life barbarously fettered and lying senseless. Amir released him instantly and ordered rose-water to be sprinkled on his face, and restoratives to be administered. When he came to his senses, Amir asked him, who he was, and why he was so miserably confined. He said, he was yet too weak to give an account of his misfortunes, but he would do so as soon as he was a little revived. Amir got him a steed to ride on, and released all the captives brought with him.

When Bahram arrived at the tent of Amir, he was put to bed, and was attended on with every care and attention. Perfumes were used with beverages to restore him and nourishing dainties were procured and given him.

His companions were also hospitably treated and allowed every sort of indulgence. When Babram had recovered himself, he stated as follows. "Although it ill-becomes me to ask you your name and designation, inasmuch as, your noble mien and majestic exterior sufficiently bespeak your exalted rank, yet I can not avoid knowing my saviour to whom I owe my life; may I therefore ask you to mention your name before I proceed with my own narrative. I was locked in that box for several days without food or water, and it is astonishing that I still have a glimmer of life left in me. Your timely interposition has saved me and to you I owe my life." Amir mentioned his name, and asked him how he came to be over-powered by Gustaham. "My friend and saviour," answered Bahram. "I had a battle with Gustaham, in which his troops were completely routed and he was taken prisoner. For four years he served under my banner and did all he could to display his fidelity towards me and to win my sympathy and affection. One day, I happened to be out on a shooting excursion and having gone far ahead of my troops, feeling extremely thirsty from over-exertion, I wanted some water from Gustaham to slake my thirst. He availed himself of the opportunity and cleverly mixed with the water some intoxicating drug, which rendered me quite unconscious. When I fell into his hands, he at once along with his friends and troopers, chained and placed me in the coffin, (from which you have just rescued me) to be brought here to Nowsherawan." Amir consoled Bahram, who was pleased to find himself under obligation to one, who had no equal in the world.

The story of Bahram's release and of all the captives reached Gustaham, with an account that he was receiving every attention and hospitality in the tent of Amir. This unpropitious event drove Gustaham to madness, and without losing a moment repaired to the court and reported to the king all that he had heard. The king did not approve of Amir's conduct in releasing Bahram and immediately sent for him and enquired why he went so far as to release from captivity a man who was his deadly enemy. In reply Amir explained to the king how Bahram was taken prisoner by Gustaham, and in what state he found him in the box. He added that if the king's chieftains stooped to such dastardly acts in overpowering the brave, his name would be branded with infamy, and his people would begin to hate him. The king demanded Bahram's presence, so that he might hear his story from his own lips. As Amir had left Bahram in the vestibule, he was at once ushered into the king's presence. The

king asked Bahram if he had been overtaken by Gustaham in a fair and open encounter, or was treacherously overpowered. "My august monarch," answered Bahram submissively, "It is no exaggeration, if I venture to assert that I have been straving ever since my confinement in the box, from which I only got my release at the noble hands of Amir, when my life was about to leave its tenement of clay. I am still weak and exhausted; I have suffered; nevertheless will I venture to deprive Gustaham of his sword, should he be willing to encounter me in a hand-to-hand struggle." The king asked Gustaham to explain, but he lowered his head from shame and said nothing. The king then asked Bahram if he would like to wrestle with Amir. The latter stated that Bahram was yet too weak, but if the king was at all anxious to see the wrestling, he should allow him at least forty day's time to recruit his strength. The king approved of Amir's suggestion, and putting Bahram in his charge, let him depart with some suits of valuable robes.

On the expiry of forty days, Amir appeared before the king with Bahram, and reminded him of his desire to witness the wrestling. The king asked Bahram if he was willing and prepared, and he signified his assent. A wrestling ground was immediately prepared, and these brave and sturdy men after donning the wrestler's dress, which was made of tiger's skin, commenced measuring their herculean strength, one against the other. The combatants grappled with each other, twisted and coiled about, now one, now the other, foiling and being foiled; but neither gained any advantage over his assailant. At last when all other attempts failed, Amir with a cry of *Alla-O-Akber* lifted Bahram over his head, and was about to dash him down, when Bahram acknowledged Amir's superiority and was softly put down. Shouts of praises pealed forth from every direction extolling the bravery of Amir. The king too praised the redoubtable hero of the moslem faith for the success he had achieved over Bahram. Amir saluted the king and asked Bahram to attend on His Majesty, but the latter declined and expressed his intention to remain with Amir, to which the king consented. The heroes were invested with robes and treated by the king with marked consideration and favour. Amir then returned to his camp with Bahram, and after making the necessary arrangements for his comfort, wrote a letter to his father, Khaja Abdul Motallib, giving him a detailed account of his journey, and of his exploits since his departure from Mecca. He despatched this epistle through Amar.

The *Sasanis*, one and all, began visiting Gustaham, either privately or openly, headed by Bukhtak and made complaints and lamentations for the disgrace they had suffered on account of Amir Hamzah. They said, "owing to Hamzah, we have not only lost much of our dignity and position, but have been greatly lowered in the eyes of the king, and are now regarded with scorn and contempt. It is therefore of the highest importance to adopt some means to remove him from our way, for unless this is done, Hamzah will be daily rising in the king's favour, while we shall be losing ground, until we become mere non-entities in the king's court." "In strength," answered Gustaham, "none will overcome Hamzah, but in the grab of friendship, I sha try to kill him within a short time."

Gustaham accordingly repaired the next morning to Amir's camp and with all imaginable humility and submissiveness introduced himself to him and began flattering and cajoling him with soft and sweet addresses. There was a vast amount of cunning beneath the gloss of excessive politeness, and Amir naturally unaware of his duplicity treated him with kindness and courtesy. Gustaham waited on Amir twice a day and evinced enthusiastic devotion to him, so much so, that in the course of time, he succeeded in making so great an impression of his fidelity and devotedness on Amir's heart, that the latter had not the faintest doubt in the sincerity of his pretended friend.

When Gustaham had thus succeeded in implanting the idea of his fidelity in Amir's simple and generous heart, he asked him one day to accept of an invitation to a garden party. Amir, naturally a plain hearted man, did not for a moment suspect foul play, and accepted the invitation without any hesitation.

It was the king's practice to hold the court for a week, and to spend the next eight days in the delights of the harem and in the company of his sweet-hearts. When the invitation was issued by Gustaham, the king had retired to his *seraglio* after the week's work, and the opportunity was availed of by Gustaham to get Amir also to pass it in enjoyment and revelry. With Bahram, Mokbil and some other companions, Amir proceeded to the garden. Gustaham had spread cloths of valuable texture from the gate of the garden up to the *Barahdaree* for Amir and his companions to walk in, while the *Barahdaree* itself was tastefully decorated

and furnished in princely style. Amir was pleased with the preparations made for his reception, and thanked and complemented Gustaham for the trouble he had taken. Gustaham placed before Amir the choicest dainties, fresh fruits and rarities of Madayen, and nymph-like cup-bearers were in attendance circulating the wine.

It would appear that before Amir had entered the garden, Gustaham had kept concealed some four hundred trustworthy soldiers within the recesses of the garden, and instructed them to emerge from their ambush and fall on Amir and his companions at a given signal from him, which would be the three successive clapping of the hands. He told them, moreover, that they were not to fear the king's displeasure, for which he would answer. Thus his plan arranged, Gustaham remained with Amir until the dead of night, when finding him and all his companions inebriated, he left the *Barahdaree*, and coming down into the corridor clapped his hands so violently that the soldiers rushed from their ambush and headed by Gustaham hastened to where Amir was.

Coming face to face with Amir, Gustaham thundered forth. "O, Arab, you had rendered yourself extremely odious, and treated the nobles and dignitaries of the court with scornful disdain, but behold the angle of death is hovering over your head; prepare to meet your doom at the hands of one who knows how to punish you." So saying, he bounded towards Amir with his drawn sword and was about to strike him, when Bahram, although in a state of inebriety, sprang forward and shielded him. The sword did not hurt Amir, but falling on Bahram inflicted a severe wound, which caused his entrails to protrude. Mokbil was clever enough not to take too much wine, and was looking with anxious amusement at the turn of events; directly he saw Gustaham assuming a defiant attitude, he adjusted arrows to his bow and shot the assailants in quick succession and with such precision that the once delightful garden soon became a platform of the dead and dying. In striking Bahram, Gustaham was convinced that he had killed Amir, and therefore did not tarry a moment, but took to his heels.

When Amir regained consciousness, he was surprised to find a change as truly dreadful as the evening had been enjoyable. On the one hand, he found Bahram lying prostrate on the ground gasping for life; on the other, he saw the garden strewn with the corpses of the fallen soldiers. He made

enquiries as to the cause of it all, and Mokbil informed him of the whole affair, and said that under the cloak of friendship, Gustaham had attempted to take his life, but fearing the dreadful retribution awaiting him, he had fled in all haste.

Meanwhile the report of Amir's death spread like wild-fire. The king was grieved at the unhappy news and immediately sent Hurmuz Tajdar, Bukhtak and Khaja Buzurchemehar to enquire into the truth of the report, despatching at the same time a strong body of horse under the command of Alkamah to hunt down Gustaham. On entering the garden, Hurmuz, Bukhtak and the Khaja found Amir safe and sound, but were sorry to find Bahram lying prostrate with a wound in his abdomen, which had nearly disembowelled him. Amir asked Buzurchemehar to heal Bahram's wound as he was in mortal agony. He said that if Bahram did not recover, he would wreak a fearful vengeance upon the *Sasanis*, and would not spare a single soul. Buzurchemehar, although an expert physician of his time, was troubled to see the nature of Bahram's wound, wide and gaping, and while he was in perplexity, Amar returned with Khaja Abdul Motallib's reply. He was exceedingly moved to find one of his comrades in so precarious a state and after exchanging a few words with Amir, asked Buzurchemehar what remedy he intended applying to restore Bahram, who was dying. Buzurchemehar expressed his anxiety and said that unless the intestines were safely replaced in the stomach without touching the vital chord, there was no hope of Bahram's recovery. "Khaja," said Amar impatiently, "there is no doubt that you are an experienced physician, and what you say is perfectly correct, but every one has his own way of treatment, and I will see what I can do to cure Bahram without endangering his life." So saying, he took out a razor from his pocket, and pressing Bahram between his two legs extended his hands towards his stomach. Buzurchemehar asked Amar what he intended doing; he said that he would cut the part of the entrails that were protruding and then cure the wound by applying an ointment. Hearing of Amar's dangerous remedy, Bahram became hopeless of surviving the operation and in utter despondency drew a deep sigh, which caused his bowels to return to their proper places. Buzurchemehar applauded Amar for his wisdom and after sewing the wound, ordered stimulants to be given to Bahram.

The Khaja, Hurmuz Tajdar and Bukhtak returned to

their respective houses, while Amir preferred to remain in the garden with all his companions until the recovery of Bahram. The next morning the Khajah appeared before the king and related to him the whole affair. The king became apprehensive lest Amir should consider the dastardly act of Gustaham to have emanated from him and to dispel such an idea from Amir's mind, he expressed his intention of removing him for a short time into his own garden *Bagdad*, which was a beautiful place for him to enjoy and refresh himself in.

Bagdad was a fine delicious garden covering a large area of land. It was intersected by neat gravel-walks, the flower-beds were studded with an infinite variety of the loveliest and sweetest flowers, which wafted by the soft gentle breeze, diffused their sweet odours around. Vases of the richest porcelain and sculptural marble were likewise filled with sweet-scented flowers, or else, with fragrant waters, so that the atmosphere of this true elysium was a combination of delightful fragrances. Refreshing silvery fountains played in every direction, and birds of the richest and the gaudiest plumage were the warbling tenants of the place. The vines laden with the most luscious grapes spread their myriad tendrils over delicate trellis work, while orange and citron trees, gemmed with their rich fruitage, and lined in beautiful rows, enhanced the loveliness of the scene. The garden was walled up on all sides, and within it were several splendid buildings sumptuously furnished, and adorned with jewels and mosaic work.

To this terrestrial paradise Amir was ordered to be removed, and the Khajah, accordingly repaired to him with presents from the king and communicated to him His Majesty's intention. He said the king had sent out six chiefs and several scouts to scour the country and arrest Gustaham, and that as soon as the scoundrel was arrested, he would receive a condign punishment. The king, he proceeded, had fully sympathised with the unfortunate event, and to demonstrate his feelings of affection had sent the choicest presents, and had also issued strict orders for the careful treatment of Bahram, so as to ensure his speedy recovery. The king was, however, against the admission of Bukhtak and Amar into the garden, as both these men were evil-mongers and at variance with each other, and likely to create disturbances. Amir accepted the king's orders, and accompanied by Mokbil and Adi repaired to the new garden,

where he was received by the king with the utmost courtesy and complacence and seated on his right hand. He was entertained with amusements of all sorts likely to divert his attention from the sad incident.

While things were going on thus, Amar, who was not allowed admission, got very much distracted on being severed from Amir's society. At last he wended his way towards *Bagdad* and arriving at the gate of the garden found Adi seated on a chair and drinking freely of delicious wine, and eating the choicest viands supplied by his attendants. Amar asked the people why Adi was seated at the entrance gate, while Amir was inside the garden and was informed that he had been posted at the gate to prevent Amar and Bukhtak from entering the garden. Hearing this, Amar saluted Adi and took a seat by his side. Adi asked him what made him come and what he was looking for. In reply he said, "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you for the last two days; prompted by friendly feelings and being unable to endure separation any longer, I trudged up to this place to inquire after your health, which I am glad to find is good and you happy. Although you have discarded your old and dear friend, I cannot consider it fair to neglect you, and I have acquitted myself of the duty which one friend has to observe towards another." Adi was influenced by Amar's flatteries and invited him to a glass of wine. After drinking a glass or two Amar spoke to Adi. "My friend, I have purchased a ruby for a nominal sum; will you kindly see it and tell me if I have not been deceived?" Adi was pleased to find that Amar considered him skilled in testing precious stones and he returned the compliment by saying. "Is it possible for a keen-witted man like you to be duped easily, yet, as you have brought the ruby to show me, I shall be only too glad to examine it and fix its value." Amar put his hand into his pocket and taking out a handful of sand, threw it on the face of Adi; and while he began to rub his eyes and clear the sand from them, assisted by his attendants, Amar sprang forward and entered the garden in a moment, leaving Adi behind to curse and swear at him. When Adi had cleared his face and rubbed away the sand from his eyes, he asked his servants about Amar, but no one could tell where he had gone. Adi was convinced that he had fled through fear and he indulged himself again in wine as freely as before.

Amar was overjoyed with the splendid scenery of the garden. Walking through its various parterres, he at last approached the

Barahdaree, where Amir was amusing with the king. Close to the *Barahdaree* stood a plane-tree on the bank of a rivulet flowing beside the house and Amar seating himself under its shade, began singing to the love of his *Dotara*. The song attracted Amir's attention, who asked Mokbil how, in spite of his strict orders, Adi had allowed Amar to enter the garden. Amir was offended at Adi's neglect of duty, but the king interceded on his behalf and ordered Amar to be sent for and admitted to the entertainment. A *chobdar* was sent to call Amar, but he declined to come, and returned the man with the following apology. "It would be presumptuous for a man in my humble position to dare to mix in the society of the king, and of Amir. The captivating sceneries of *Bagdad* prompted me to enter it. I walked in here and took my seat under this tree to enjoy the warbling of the beautiful birds, and the sweet odours of the fragrant flowers, which are here in such profusion. I cannot, however, venture to disobey the king's orders, but I only fear that my presence with the king may prove obnoxious to any one there, who may try to hurt me. It is therefore safer and more pleasant to remain where I am." The *chobdar* returned to the king and reported all that Amar had said. The king burst into a fit of laughter and taking Amar walked to the place, where Amar was seated and singing. Finding the king coming with all his nobles, Amar advanced and after kissing His Majesty's feet said that he did not expect his royal master would consider him an obstacle to his pleasures and would exclude him from his society. The king caught hold of him by the hand and took him along to the *Barhadaree*. Amar was given the duty of cup bearer and he regaled the king with his pleasantries and melodious songs.

Bukhtak was extremely grieved to hear of Amar's entry into the garden and brooded over in silence the many evils likely to result during his absence. With some valuable presents he approached Adi and asked his permission to enter the garden. Adi was offended at the nature of Bukhtak's request and directed him to depart honourably, saying that no bribery or temptation would induce him to break the laws of the court. Disappointed and crest-fallen, Bukhtak returned homeward and passed the day in sorrow and affliction. When night came, he covered himself with a blanket and taking a bundle of clothes under his arm, emerged quietly, from his house and avoiding the sentries, and watchmen approached the wall of the garden in order to effect an entry through the sewer leading into it.

While Bukhtak was thus engaged, Amar, who was all along performing the duty of cup-bearer and regaling the king, reflected on the incidents of the past, which proved Gustaham to be a fiend in human shape and not choosing to remain inattentive to what was going on around him, left his place, and sauntered away to get a view of the interior of the garden. Gradually he approached the gate where Adi was seated. He heard Adi speaking about Bukhtak's arrival and offering him bribes for permission to enter the garden. Amar was startled at this, and reflected within himself that when Bukhtak had gone so far, he was sure to adopt some means to enter the garden, and he therefore went about looking for the place from where he might effect an entry. Suddenly his eyes fell upon something in one of the bushes. There he threaded his way and found a bundle of cloth. He opened it, and lo! there was a suit of Bukhtak's dress. He chuckled within himself at his success so far, and now remained on the look out for Bukhtak himself. Casually his eyes fell on the sewer, and he found some body protruding his head through the privy-hole and then drawing it back. Assured that it was no other than Bukhtak, who was looking for an opportunity to crouch into the garden, he immediately repaired to the gardener and informed him of his having seen a thief trying to enter the garden through the sewer. The gardener at once repaired to the place with some of his men, and hid himself in a corner. Directly Bukhtak thrust his head out of the privy-hole, the gardener caught hold of him, and assisted by his men dragged him out in spite of his assurances that he was Bukhtak. They fastened him to the branch of a tree and bastinadoed him cruelly. Amar, who had kept himself all the while aloof from the scene, asked the gardener impatiently what the hue and cry were about, and the latter stated that he had caught and bound a thief to a tree. Hearing Amar's voice, Bukhtak implored him to come to his succour and get him released from the hands of the gardener. Amar approached and asked Khaja Alif Posh, for this was the gardener's name, to let Bukhtak go, but the gardener declined and said that Bukhtak, the king's minister, was not so low a man as to try to enter the garden by the privy-drain in the dead of night. The fellow, whose release he desired, was surely a thief, who had attempted to make his way into the garden to rob his royal master. Then even if he were Bukhtak, he would not let him go till morning when he would take him to the king for orders. Bukhtak asked Amar to let him have his suit of clothes, but the latter denied all knowledge of it.

Amar then returned to the king, and when the morning dawned, induced His Majesty to take a walk in the garden, and enjoy the fragrant breeze, which accompanied by the warbling of the birds made the atmosphere delightful. The king took Amir by the hand, and went through the parterres, until Amar led him on to the place, where Bukhtak was tied to the tree. When the king was within the sight of Bukhtak, the latter cried out, "Mighty lord, the gardeners have brought me to this state and treated me with every indignity. His complaints were interrupted by the head gardener, who appeared promptly and said. "My lord, the thief had attempted to effect his entry into the garden by the privy-drain, but I got a clue and pounced upon him at once. He was dragged out and tied to the tree, and when sufficiently beaten declared himself to be Bukhtak". Hearing this, the king advanced towards the tree and to his astonishment recognized in the alleged thief his minister Bukhtak. The king laughed on seeing his minister in so unseemly a plight. He was, however, released by order of Amir, who ascribed the stratagem to Amar's shrewd trickery. Bukhtak was found bruised and lacerated from the effect of the lashing and blood oozed from several parts of his body. The king ordered him to be turned out, but owing to Amir's mediation, was excused. The king, with Amir and his companions, proceeded to another delightful garden situated in the middle of *Bagdad*. It was known by the name of *Bag-Husht-Behisht* and was more beautiful than *Bagdad*. Amar began playing practical jokes on Bukhtak and said to the king, "My lord, Bukhtak's bones have been miserably cracked by the gardeners ; he has turned bald-headed from the effect of reckless shoeing, so much so, that the crown of his head has assumed the smoothness of a billiard ball. If he were allowed to apply ● *Momiyacee* to the affected parts, it would have a beneficial effect upon him. He has taken the consequence of his foolish attempt to enter the garden stealthily at the dead of night, and now repents it and should be excused." So saying, he directed his attention towards Bukhtak and said. "Fold your hands to the king and repent of your folly and say that there will be no recurrence of such baseness in the near or distant future." In short, Amar was making a fool of Bukhtak and thus exciting laughter. Adi was then sent for, and when he appeared, the king asked him why he failed to carry out the order disallowing Bukhtak's admission into the garden. Adi snuffed and said gruffly, "My lord

* A kind of medicine used to cure the pains.

is it possible for Bukhtak to find entry into the garden without your Majesty's express orders ? He had ofcourse come to me and was offering presents for permission to enter the garden, but I rejected his offers and turned him out with a rebuff. The king pointed Bukhtak to Adi, who on seeing him flew into a fit of passion and catching hold of him by the throat said. "Will you come out of the garden and see how well you are punished for disobedience of orders."? Amir warned Adi not to insult Bukhtak who, he said, had been excused by the king, and directed him to go back to his place.

As the king had not had a wink of sleep for several nights, His Majesty retired to rest early the next evening. Amir took the opportunity to leave the king alone in order to take a bath and change his suit. With his friends, he went to a fountain, which flowed at one end of the garden and discharged its water into the palace through a lattice. Sweet rippling of the crystal water prompted Amir to bathe in the fountain and change his suit. While he was bathing Malka Mehar Nigar, the daughter of Nowsherawan, happened to be seated at the window looking down at the garden. Accidentally her eyes fell on the naked bust of Amir; she was smitten with him and staggered back a few paces in utter consternation. Unwilling to let Amir go without making known her love for him, she flung her necklace towards him to attract his attention. It struck him on the shoulder and he looked up at the *hourî*, who became the object of his love henceforward. Amir was riveted to the spot with transcending amazement at the spectacle which burst upon his vision. The arrow of love shot across his tender heart, and he heaved a deep sigh, and became a prey to acute grief. He passed the day in extreme anguish, and when night came, asked the king's permission to retire and take a little rest after being up for several nights. On taking leave of the king, he repaired to the window with Mokbil. There was no means of going up and entering the palace, but by a big tree, which rose above the upper-story of the house and stretched its shady branches over the roof. Amir left Mokbil under the tree and climbing up was instantly on the roof.

CHAPTER XX.

AMIR'S FIRST INTERVIEW WITH MEHAR NIQAR.

FROM the roof of the house, Amir saw his angel seated in her chamber surrounded by the beauties of the harem, but tears were trickling down her ebon-lashes and she sobbed audibly. Amir had at first seen her from a distance, but now when he took a closer view of the *hourî*, he was struck with her charming appearance. She was a lovely maiden of transcendent beauty. Her feature and complexion surmounted with a cluster of raven hair added a charm to her dazzling appearance. Her countenance was a perfect oval, the chin was very small and round, and the brows finely pencilled and arched. Her almond eyes, shaded by the ebon-lashes, were soft and dark; while on her plump cheeks rested the delicate tint of the rose. The nose was perfectly straight, and the lips, small and exquisitely chiselled, were of a vivid vermilion, which, when slightly apart, revealed a set of pearly teeth. The neck was gracefully arched and with a slope of the shoulders perfected the outlines of the arms. At the threshold of this fairy did Amir now find himself standing. There was a tumbler of delicious wine placed before her and each of her companions was pressing her to take a cup of it and dispel her gloom. When thus pressed, she asked them to drink the health of their lovers before she tasted of the wine, whereupon Fitna Bano took up the first cup and drank Amar's health. Amir was amazed to hear Amar's name, but before he could form any idea of it, another lady drank the health of Mokbil, and so did each of the other ladies drink by turns the health of their respective lovers. Malka Mehar Nigar in her own turn drank the health of Amir saying, "I drink the health of my noble lover, who has rescued you all from the hands of Husham." Amir was pleased to notice this sentiment of affection in the charming creature before him, who every time she drank of the wine, took his name. The Malka passed this way with her companions till midnight, after which they were allowed to depart, Malka seeking her own couch. When stillness prevailed and the females were wrapped in slumber, Amir went down the flight of stairs and quietly glided to the Malka's couch. Sleep

had just overtaken her, but she slept only the half sleep of the smitten, and troops of love tales were passing through her brains. For a moment Amir looked at her lovely complexion with mingled awe and admiration, and then unable to restrain himself, seized one of her hands and imprinted numberless kisses upon it. The Malka was startled from slumber and rose abruptly with a shriek, which resounded through the palace. She knew not that her lover was by her side. She thought the intruder to be a stranger, and calling him a thief screamed aloud in fright, which startled the inmates of the house, and brought them together. The Malka was ashamed when she recognized Amir and sent away her maids with the excuse that she had been under the influence of a dream. Amir had withdrawn himself for a time on the approach of the females. The night had already far advanced when Amir had entered her chamber, so that the morning dawned shortly after he met the object of his heart and with a profound sigh he took leave of her, promising to return the next night. He came down by the same tree, which led him up and returned to the garden along with Mokbil.

The king emerged from his sleeping chamber, and ordered merriments to be renewed. Buzurchemehar noticed a change in Amir's countenance. Amir had lost all composure, and the perplexity of his heart was depicted on his face. A gloom was spread over his noble countenance, and his mind, in spite of the several kinds of amusements, was absorbed in something which was seering his brains. Buzurchemehar soon perceived that Amir had fallen a victim to some charms, which were corroding his brains. He expressed his doubts to Amar, who also shared with him in the opinion. And in this too the attention of Bukhtak was attracted, and he was not idle in divining the cause. As in the perturbation of his heart Amir went frequently out to cast a glance towards the abode of his fairy, Bukhtak represented to the king that constant movements of men tended to break the monotony of the mirth, and asked His Majesty to impose a penalty on those who left their places without sufficient reason. The king agreed to his proposals and with the consent of Amir passed an order to that effect. Amir could hardly restrain himself longer, and was obliged to break the order twice, for which he paid the penalty. Buzurchemehar did not approve of this disagreeable conduct of Bukhtak and asked Amar to adopt some means to get rid of him. Amar replied that there was but a simple remedy and he would see the fellow off in a moment. So saying, he turned to the king and

said, "My lord, the time is pleasant for your Majesty to take a few cups of wine". "The king nodded assent and Amar immediately filled a glass and offered it to His Majesty. After giving a few glasses of wine to the king, Amar went round offering a glass of wine to each of the nobles. When he came to Bukhtak, the latter suspected treachery and declined to take any wine, saying that he had sworn never to touch it. Amar represented Bukhtak's refusal to the king and said, "My gracious lord, it is curious that Bukhtak refuses to take wine from my hands, while your Majesty and all the other nobles have been pleased to take it without hesitation". The king ordered Bukhtak to drink some wine, which he took with much reluctance. In the cup offered to Bukhtak, Amar had mixed a little *Jamal-gota* (*Jutrpha curcas*), which after a moment produced a roaring in his stomach. Feeling the calls of nature, Bukhtak took the king's permission, and went out to ease himself. When he returned, he again felt uneasy and had to pay the penalty of the court before he went out again. The third time, when he felt restless, he did not leave his place for fear of paying a further penalty, but polluted the cushion with his odious excrement. The king was displeased with Bukhtak's conduct and ordered Adi to turn him out of the garden.

Khaja looked with great anxiety at the continued increase of Amir's disquiet, and fearing he would attract the king's notice, asked His Majesty to return to the court, where administrative business required his presence. The king accepted his minister's proposal, and after investing Amir with a set of princely robes, returned to the *Darbar*.



CHAPTER XXI.

RESTLESSNESS OF MEHAR NIGAR ON HER SEPARATION FROM AMIR.

ON his return to Telshadkam, Amir waited for the time when he would renew his visit to the Malka. The day was long and tedious and every moment that passed was painful and fraught with poignant grief. Amir counted his time by seconds and minutes with acute suspense, until the sun went down to rest in the western horizon. When darkness shrouded the sky, Amir put on night dress, and thrusting his sword into the scabbard, sallied forth from his tent accompanied by Mokbil and proceeded towards the abode of his angel. Amar had put himself on the track from before, and directly he saw Amir, challenged him as to where he was going at such a late hour of the night, and asked at the same time why he did not take him along or consider him his confidant. "I did not choose to reveal my love to you," replied Amir, "because I was afraid of your upbraidings; but now that you have offered to become my confidant, I would have your company gladly." Amar asked him about the lovely creature, who had captivated his heart and he said, in reply, that she was an angel, who was full of bloom and brilliancy, and whose loveliness was such as would inspire the warmest flights of poetical fancy. Thus speaking, Amir wended his way to *Bagdad* accompanied by Amar and Mokbil, and the hopes of revisiting the angel were up in his heart.

To return to Mehar Nigar. Most excruciating were her pains on her separation from Amir and every moment she spent was tormenting in the extreme. Her hair was dishevelled. She wept and sobbed and then sunk into her couch enveloped in her sheet. Once she would rise and look towards the garden through the window with blank despair, and, then would indulge herself in painful reverie and give free vent to her tears. She did not change her dress for the whole day; nor did she make her toilet, or take any refreshment. She rose and sank and heaved deep sighs at short intervals. Finally her whole demeanour was changed to that of a maniac. Her companions

and attendants became afraid of her health and at last some of them combined reported the fact to the nurse, who on hearing the sad episode, ran half frantic to Mehar Nigar and found her lying on her couch with her face covered. She removed the sheet from her face and asked her affectionately the cause of her affliction, assuring her at the same time that she was her confidant and would do all that was possible to solace her heart. The Malka was abashed, but encouraged by the soft reassuring words of the woman, rose up and said, "My dearest nurse, I have become enamoured of the *killer of Husham*, to whom my heart is entirely given, and it is he who alone can cure the wound of my heart." The nurse reminded her of the several princes of the *Kyani* and *Sasani* dynasties, who were anxious to offer their hands to her, and said further that Hamza was a Mahomedan, who could hardly become a fit companion to a lady, who belonged to a different religion. The Malka replied, "My dear and affectionate nurse, love knows no caste and has no prejudice. My life, I assure you, depends on the acquisition of Hamza and it is for him alone that I am willing and ready to sacrifice my heart." So saying, the Malka made over to the nurse a valuable necklace, and promised to handsomely reward her in case she helped her to acquire the husband of her choice. The nurse was avaricious enough to be easily tempted, and promised Malka to take her to Amir, when the night was a little advanced. Malka was inspired with hopes, and took her bath, and dressed herself elegantly. At the appointed time the nurse put on night-dress on Malka and herself and coming down the stairs by a ladder, they proceeded to Telshadkam. Amir's tent was close at hand, when they saw three persons cloaked in dark suits coming towards them. The nurse and the Malka hid themselves behind a tree. Amar asked Mokbil to ascertain who they were, and the latter drawing near recognized Malka and carried the pleasing news to Amir. Both the lover and the beloved fell together and embraced each other with fervid affection. Amar was introduced to Malka, who was surprised to find in him a peculiar genius. Amir returned to his tent with Malka and ordered Amar to take up the duty of a cup-bearer. The nurse was handsomely rewarded.

The night passed in enjoyments; the couple looked gay and cheerful and hopes were depicted on their faces. With the first dawn of the morn, Amir conducted Malka back to her palace and left her with a promise to see her again the next night. It is said that when Malka re-entered her chamber with the nurse

cloaked in night dress, some of the eunuchs awoke calling them thieves, but they could find none, when they went about to look for them, for Malka and the nurse had already thrown off their dark cloaks and resumed their places. At day break the chief of the eunuchs brought this fact to the notice of Malka Mehar Angez, and advised her as a further precaution to post sentries to guard the palace during the night. She approved of the proposal and expressed her intention to the king, who immediately ordered the hero *Antar-Teg-zun* to post himself below the palace-wall with four hundred men, who were to take their rounds during the night and guard the palace against the approach of designing men.

Midnight was past, and Amir grew anxious about Mehar Nigar. He asked Amar to fetch his night dress, but the latter exhorted him not to hazard his life, because Antar was posted to guard the Malka's palace. Nothing could, however, prevail on Amir, who laughed at Amar's fright, and said that after killing Husham there was nothing to daunt him from meeting Antar, whom he considered as chaff before the wind. So saying, he took Mokbil with him and proceeded to the Malka's palace. Amar did not like to be left behind and followed Amir close upon his heels. When Amir reached the garden, he saw Antar taking his rounds with his companions, all coming towards them with torches and flambeaus. Amir, Amar and Mokbil hid themselves behind a tree, so that when the sentries passed to the other end of the garden, they came below the palace-wall, and in an instant Amir climbed up the tree with Amar and was on the roof of the house. Mokbil, however, was left behind.

Amir saw from the roof that the Malka had made arrangements for his reception, and was attended only by those who were her near and dear friends. She was expecting him every moment, and was anxiously looking out for him. "I have grave doubts that Amir will be able to come here to-night," said the nurse to the Malka, "for Antar is taking his rounds below the palace-wall with four hundred men." "If Sahebkarān is truly devoted to me," responded the Malka, "he is sure to be here presently, in spite of the formidable strength of Antar and the necessary precautions taken by the king." Amir was delighted on hearing Malka's words and descended from the roof by the flight of stairs, which led to Malka's chamber. Malka's countenance beamed with joy, when her soft languishing eyes fell on her lover, as he reached the thresh-hold, and she triumphantly pointed him out to the nurse.

Malka sprang forward and took Amir by the hand and seated him on the sofa by her side. In the midst of the rejoicings, Amar was asked by the Malka to select a maiden from among the *khawases** for his companion, and he quietly seated himself next to Tarazkhuban. She frowned at Amar's impertinent intrusion and began to curse him. Malka asked Amar as to what she was muttering, and he said that it was only a little coquetry, which she was playing at with him in amorous tenderness. The Malka burst into a fit of laughter and asked Amar what made him select this lady among so many of her female attendants. He said that she wore plenty of ornaments, which tempted him to select her. This gave the irritated lady a greater offence, but she observed silence because of her mistress's remonstrances, who spoke highly of Amar's gifted merits and geniuses, and said that he was the chief of the *Ayars* and not unworthy of her attention. Amir then converted Malka to *Islam* and pledged his words that until her hands were united with his in a happy wedlock, he would remain an honest and devout companion of her, and save herself would not give his attention to any other beauty.

When the morning star emerged from the eastern chamber of the firmament, and streaks of day light were visible on the turrets of the palace, Amir took leave of the Malka and coming down the roof with Amar proceeded towards his tent. On the way they were seen by Antar's men, who took them for thieves and ran after them. Amir wielded his sword and killing some ten or twelve of them reached his tent in safety. At day break Antar was confounded to see among the slain all his own men, and reported the fact to the king. When Sahebkarān went to the court as usual, the king related to him the incident of the night and asked him to guard the palace himself the following night. Amir signified his assent and promised to carry out the king's orders. The king's arrangements were unanimously approved by the people, who thought that if the thieves were from among the *Sasunis*, they would not dare approach the palace from fear of Amir; while on the other hand, if they were Arabs or Turks, they would surely withdraw. Bukhtak alone was an exception. He said the king's order were fraught with evils, but dared not essay a word before so many. He was amazed at the king's prudence in sifting good from evil, and said within

* A female attendant.

himself that the king's arrangement was something like appointing a wolf for guarding the goats.

After the court was over, Amir returned to his tent transported with joy, and visited the Malka during the night with Amar, Mokbil being ordered to take nocturnal rounds with some of his choicest men. In this way he spent seven nights together with the Malka, after which, he reported himself to the king, who was pleased to invest him with a set of robes. On the eighth day, Bukhtak asked His Majesty to post Karan Deoband, a noble of the Sasanis, to guard the palace the next night and to allow him an opportunity of showing his services. The king approved of his proposal, and ordered Karan to take up the post with his own men, and keep a strict watch over designing and suspicious men trying to approach the palace.

Accordingly Karan picked a number of sentinels from among his chosen men, and along with them began to take his rounds below the palace from the dusk of evening. Hearing Karan's name Malka grew anxious for Amir, who, she considered, was sure to come to the palace according to his wont. She asked the nurse to go and prevent him from coming that night, but the latter consoled her saying that Amir was too prudent to hazard his life, and that she need not apprehend for him.

When it was midnight, Amir wanted his night-dress from Amar to go to Mehar Nigar, but the latter expostulated with him and tried to dissuade him from his attempt, because of Karan's reputed valour. All his remonstrances, however, failed and Amir putting on his night-dress and getting out of the tent wended his way to the Malka's palace followed by Amar and Mokbil, who did not like to leave him alone. On reaching the garden, Amir found Karan seated on a chair and cautioning his people to be careful and on the alert. Mokbil asked Amir's permission to shoot him dead with his arrow, but the latter prevented him. "Wait," he said, "until he proves an obstacle in our way."

With necessary precautions and evading the watchmen, Amir approached the palace-wall and leaving Mokbil below, as usual, went over the roof by a scaling ladder, which he had brought with him. On entering her room, Amir caught and pressed the princess affectionately to his bosom and spent the night with her until the first glimmer of the dawn obliged him to separate

Amar was let down first, but when Amir was descending by the ladder, Karan rushed at him with his drawn sword. The weapon, however, did not hurt Amir, but falling on the cord of the ladder, cut it into two. Amir fell heavily on the ground and his head striking against the wall, was cut and bled profusely. Seeing Amir in this condition, Amar and Mokbil let their stones and arrows fly against the enemies in rapid succession, until the coast was clear for Amir to be taken back to his tent in safety.

Karan recognized Amir and took the severed ladder-cord to the king, who was very much offended at Amir's conduct and calling Buzurchemehar, showed him the ladder and recited all that was told by Karan. Buzurchemehar mistrusted Karan and attributed it all to some mischievous adventurer. As a further proof, Karan spoke to the king of Amir having broken his head against the wall and he was sent for immediately.

Amir was in the meantime in great anxiety as to the ultimate result of his wound. He was ashamed of appearing before the king and wept over his said incident bitterly. In silent despair he raised his hands towards the heaven and humbly supplicated the Almighty to cure his wound before any disgrace might befall him. "I beseech Thee my Gracious God, have mercy on me," burst out Amir afflictively, "for I am innocent and my love sincere and sacred and void of any evil intention. I have converted the princess to *Islam*, and have thereby done an act of piety, which may be an atonement to a certain extent for my intrusion on a lady's privacy." While so engaged, a sort of stupefaction came over Amir; he saw in dream the prophet Abraham rubbing his hands over the wound and asking him to get up and see his wound radically cured. When Amir came to himself, he passed his hand over the wound and there was no trace of the injury. He returned thanks to God, took his bath and dressed himself. Soon after, he received the king's summons and with all his companions repaired to the Court. When he appeared at the *Darbar*, the king examined his head minutely, but there was not a scratch, still less a wound, to be seen. The king believed in the statement of Buzurchemehar and scolded Karan for his false statement and mischievous attempt to harm the reputation of an honest man.

One day, Buzurchemehar availed himself of an opportunity to represent to the king that ever since Landhour, the son of the king Sadan, had succeeded his father to the throne of Ceylon, he

had stopped sending his tribute to the Imperial treasury and had assumed a defiant attitude. The youth, he said, was a formidable prince and wielded a war-club of enormous weight, so much so, that he had become a terror to the country. The king asked Buzurchemehar to devise some plan to destroy the monster, and the minister, who was sagacious enough and knew full well of the attachment of Amir with Malka Mehar Nigar, bethought himself of the necessity of separating Amir from her for a time; he therefore advised the king to speak out publicly to the nobles and chiefs, when they attended the court, about the indomitable power of Landhour and to ask as to who among them was loyal enough to go to Ceylon and subdue this presumptuous rebel.



CHAPTER XXII.

RECEIPT OF A LETTER FROM THE BROTHER OF THE KING SADAN, COMMUNICATING THE REBELLIOUS ATTITUDE ASSUMED BY LANDHOUR AND AMIR'S DEPUTATION FOR HIS CHASTISEMENT.

THE king had not yet had occasion to address his nobles and chiefs regarding Landhour's rebellion, when an emissary from the king of Ceylon appeared and handed over a letter. Bukhtak opened its cover and read its contents as follows. "After praising the idol-gods, *Lat and Manat*, and worshipping the fire-temple of Nimrod, I take this opportunity to communicate to your Majesty that before me my brother Sadan occupied the throne of Ceylon. One day, as he was taking the diversion of hunting, he chased a game, lost his company and was carried away so far by his eagerness as to ride on continually for three days, until he became extremely exhausted and feeling thirsty wandered about in the wilderness to look for a pool to quench his thirst. Casually he came across a very tall woman, who had just filled a leather bag with water and was about to carry it home. Sadan accosted her and wanted a little water to slake his thirst. The woman emptied her bag and began to fill it again with fresh water. Sadan did not approve of her conduct and contemplated to spill her blood after drinking the water. When the woman had taken fresh water, she gave him a little out of it in a pot. Sadan took the pot up, but scarcely he had taken a few draughts of water, when the woman stopped him from drinking, and asked him his name, birth-place and designation. Sadan frowned at her interruption and said that he must quench his thirst before he would answer her questions, but the woman would not listen to him and interrupted him from time to time. At last when Sadan had slaked his thirst, he rushed at the woman with his drawn sword, and demanded the reason of her disgraceful behaviour, for she had not allowed him, in spite of his extreme thirst, to drink the water freely. The woman laughed out and asked him to give his name and designation before she would satisfy him as to the nature of her treatment of him. Sadan mentioned his name and rank and the circumstance which brought him in contact with her. She rebuked him for his

want of common sense, which a king in his position ought to possess, and said, she did not allow him to drink freely, because she believed it would have harmed him. Hearing this, Sadan was smitten with her acute sagacity, and as she had no relatives of her own, he brought her to the town and married her. Shortly after, when the woman was far advanced with child, Sadan breathed his last and I succeeded to the throne. The woman gave birth to a child unusually big for his age. The mother also died shortly after and I gave the boy the name of Landhour and made arrangements for his nourishment. My wife also brought forth a child to me on the same day, when Landhour was born and I gave him the name of Jayepur. Both these boys were brought up together and I paid equal attention to them. When they were five years old, one of the maid-servants slapped Landhour for some fault, whereupon he dashed her to the ground and killed her. All those who were attending on Landhour were frightened and brought to me the sad news. I ordered Landhour to be placed before a wanton elephant. The order was carried out, but no sooner did the elephant stretch his trunk to lift him up, than he caught hold of it and with one violent jerk tore it off from the head. The elephant ran wild and frantic causing a great sensation in the town. I then ordered Landhour to be imprisoned, but no one would dare approach him, except a minister, who undertook to bring him before me. He took a dish of * *Hulwa* with him and placed it before Landhour. After he had taken it and was appeased, the minister was able to win his friendly attention, and brought him over to me. Looking at me, he asked the minister who I was. The latter informed him that I was his uncle and the king of the place. He then asked who the king was before me and was told he was his father. On this Landhour took me for an aggressor and directed me to vacate the throne. The minister advised me to leave the throne quietly and on my doing so, he seated himself on it. After a while, Landhour wanted his dinner, which was brought to him by the minister mixed with some intoxicating drugs. To avoid suspicion, he made me and my son eat with him. We ate and fell senseless. Shortly after the minister brought me and my son back to our senses with the aid of a certain liquid. I ordered Landhour to be strongly fettered and made over to Aurang and Gourang, the princes of Lakhnowti, to be kept carefully. These princes took him along with them to their own city, and imprisoned him in a well.

* A native pudding.

In this dungeon Landhour remained immured for sometime, until the sister of the princes saw in a dream the prophet Seth, who told her that she was to be married with Landhour and would have a son by him, who would become a great prince. According to the clue given her by the prophet, she repaired to the well with a dish of *Halwa*, and going down offered Landhour the refreshment. She then cut the iron fetters with a file and narrated to him her dream. This done, she returned home, leaving Landhour to plunge into a sound sleep. The guards round the well did not consider it well to interfere in the action of Aurang's sister, but when they no longer heard the groans and wailings of Landhour, they began to grow suspicious. They accordingly approached the well and found that Landhour was fast asleep, resting his head on the piles of the broken fetters. A great sensation prevailed among them. They brought this fact to the notice of Aurang and Gourang, who repaired forthwith to the well with some of their chosen soldiers. The truth was realized. They wanted to refetter Landhour, but the latter awoke and catching hold of them by their necks felled them to the ground and related to them all about their sister's dream and her help in effecting his release. He said that he would not let them go alive, but for the sake of their sister, who had pledged her word to take him for her husband. The two brothers took Landhour out of the well and placed him on the throne of their country. Landhour caused a huge war-club to be made for himself and expressed his intention to march to Ceylon. Aurang and Gowrang advised him to organize his troops before he entered upon the proposed expedition. He approved of their proposal and engaged himself in strengthening his army. As soon as this was done, he started for Ceylon with a strong body of soldiers. When he approached within a short distance of the fort, I sent my son with two hundred thousand mounted soldiers to encounter him. There was a pitched battle between Landhour and my son, but the latter retreated eventually, being unable to yield to the murderous stroke of Landhour's monster war-club, which killed twenty and thirty of his men at a time. He shut himself within the fort and began showering shells and bullets from the parapet. Nothing daunted Landhour; he marched gallantly on and arriving at the city gate, smashed it to pieces with one stroke of his war-club. He entered the city carrying death and destruction along. I saw no way of protecting myself and therefore approached him quietly and implored for mercy. He asked me the conditions on which I craved to be spared. I told him that I should have some time allowed me to get His Majesty's orders before I vacated the

throne. He said that he cared little for me or my feelings, and directed me to depart to some distant island and there to await the reply to my letter. I have therefore left the place for life, and inform your Majesty accordingly. If Landhour will not be subverted soon, it is not unlikely that he will prove obnoxious to Your Majesty.

Nowsherawan consulted Buzurchemehar in the matter and the minister spoke as follows. "In my humble opinion, it seems advisable that Your Majesty should order Gustaham to start for Ceylon at once. After this, the nobles and chiefs may be asked in open court as to who should cut off the head of Landhour. Among the *Sasanis*, I find no one capable of undertaking the hazardous task, except Hamza, who has already been smitten with the charms of Mehar Nigar, and who might be ready to sacrifice himself for the cause of his monarch. It is therefore necessary that Hamza should be sent out on the expedition, for if he be slain, your Majesty will be relieved of all blames arising from his love for your daughter. On the other hand, if he succeeds in subjugating Landhour, your Majesty will have a large portion of your dominions regained." The king approved of his minister's advice, and immediately sent orders to Gustaham, who had since wounding Bahram settled in the distant clime of Zabul, to march at once to Ceylon with his forty thousand soldiers to chastise Landhour and thereby obtain pardon for his past crimes. The next day, when the court was full and all the nobles and dignitaries were present, the king said. "Braves and gentlemen! be it known to you that Khusro Landhour has usurped the throne of Ceylon and girded his loins against me. Is there any one among you who will go and cut off his head? I pledge my word to offer the hand of my daughter, Mehar Nigar, to him who succeeds in subjugating the rebel. No one among the *Sasanis* agreed to undertake the expedition, partly on account of the perilous journey by sea, and partly from the fear of encountering a gigantic hero. Amir, however, rose from his seat and asked the king's permission to go to Ceylon and bring Landhour alive to him. The king folded him to his breast and after investing him with a set of valuable robes ordered thirty ships to be equipped for the expedition.

Taking leave of the king, Amir returned to his tent, and directed the troops to march ahead and wait for him at *Balsora*. This done, he expressed to Amar his intention of seeing the princess once before his departure; the latter advised him to write to

Buzurchemehar. A letter was accordingly written and sent through Amar. The Khaja took the letter to the king and spoke to his Majesty as follows. "My noble and gracious monarch, Amir has already been named your son-in-law and will be so throughout the length and breadth of Ceylon. It is therefore strange that he departs from Your Majesty without drinking a cup of *Sherbet* which a son-in-law ought to have at such a moment. The king laughed at Buzurchemehar's suggestion and ordered him to get the needful done. The Khaja asked the king's permission to take Hamzah into the *harem* and get him to drink the *sherbet* from the hands of the queen according to the custom of the place. The king saw no objection, and Buzurchemehar first entered the *harem* and conveyed to the queen all that was said to him by the king regarding the ceremony to be observed by her. When Amir proceeded towards the palace, Bukhtak, who did not like his going into the *harem*, followed him on his mule. Amir did not relish his company and asked Amar to keep him back somehow. Amar ogled Amir to proceed on and then catching hold of the rein of Bukhtak's mule, asked him to pay up the money, which he owed him on his promissory hand-note, since he was going on a perilous expedition to Ceylon. Bukhtak resented at Amar's intrusion and said. "This is not a place for you to demand your money and interrupt me from attending the betrothal ceremony of your master; you may go and lodge your complaint for the money, if you will; for unless this is done and your claims proved, I will not pay you a farthing." I am not a weak man," retorted Amar angrily, "that I should go to a tribunal and seek justice. To be sure, I would not let you budge an inch forward, unless you pay up all my money here and at once." Bukhtak ordered his slaves to push Amar aside, but before this could be done, Amar sprang upon the mule and taking his seat behind Bukhtak, raised his sword and threatened to kill him, if he uttered a word. Bukhtak was paralyzed, and implored Amar to spare him. Amar came down, but before he did so, struck his head with the hilt of his sword and left it bleeding. Bukhtak repaired to the king besmeared with blood, and complained against Amar. The king sent for Amar and asked him to explain his conduct. "My august monarch," said he submissively, "I lay my humble case before your Majesty for calm and patient consideration and beseech redress at the foot-stool of your Majesty's throne. I hold a hand-note from Bukhtak for payment of a certain sum due to me. As I am now going to Ceylon on an expedition with Amir, I wanted him to pay up my money, provided I may not return alive from a long and perilous journey, but

instead of complying with my request, he ordered his slaves to beat and turn me out, and when they all turned upon me, I was ofcourse irritated at his cowardly conduct and left the place after striking him on the head with the hilt of my sword. I now leave your Majesty to judge as to who is to blame in this unfortunate affair. So saying, Amar placed Bukhtak's hand-note before the king and solicited justice. The king declared Bukhtak guilty and directed him to pay Amar's money on pain of punishment, if he failed to do so. The money was immediately paid, and Amar returned to the palace.

While Amar was thus engaged with Bukhtak, Amir entered the palace with Mokbil. He was seated on a sofa, and all sorts of amusements befitting the occasion were arranged. In the midst of mirth and hilarity, Amar arrived at the palace gate; and while attempting to enter the house, was opposed and threatened by the gate-keeper, who did not, ofcourse, recognize him. When thus prevented, Amar covered his eyes with his hands, and throwing himself to the ground, rolled about cursing and abusing the gate-keeper voilently for having hurt his eyes and blinded him. The gate-keeper was horrified and began flattering Amar. The hue and cry raised by Amar attracted Amir's attention, who followed by Buzürchemehar ran to his help. He saw Amar rolling on the ground with his hands over his eyes and writhing with pain. Amir asked him to open his eyes, so as to enable the Khaja to examine them, but he would neither open them, nor speak any thing, but rented the air with his wailings. At last Amir removed his hands by force and was surprised to find that they were totally unhurt and shining like a pair of brilliant stars. Amir asked Amar why he stooped to so wicked a design and created an unnecessary disturbance in the *harem*. He said in reply that the gate-keeper had raised his stick to strike him, and had not immediate succour come to his aid, it would have hurt his eyes and turned him blind. Amir and Khaja burst into a fit of laughter and taking him along entered the palace. Amir sat on the sofa and was offered *sherbet*, which was attendede with some other betrothal ceremonies. Malka Mehar Angez, who had all along been with her daughter behind the curtain, made her vows to solemnize the marriage of her daughter, Malka Mehar Nigar; with Amir, as soon as, he returned from Ceylon successful and glorious. Amar turned his attention towards Buzurchemehar and said, "It is strange that Amir should leave for Ceylon without having even a glance at his bride, for if we return from

our expedition, safe and sound, we cannot say for certain if Amir will be married to the same lady, besides, I do not know if the princess is dark or fair, slim or stout, and I must satisfy myself before I leave the place. The Malka laughed out at Amar's turn of discourse and said that a bride, until married, could not be seen but by the females. To this Amar replied that he had no female relatives in the country to see the bride and that he left the matter to the Malka herself to decide. After some reflection, the Malka ordered Buzurchemehar to conduct Amir in, and when this was done, Amir made a profound bow to his mother-in-law and offered presents. Mehar Nigar remained all along abashed and cast down with maiden modesty. Malka Mehar Angez was pleased with Amir's personal appearance and accepted him cheerfully for her son-in-law. Buzurchemehar asked Mehar Nigar to give something as a token of remembrance to Amir; she immediately took an emerald ring out of her finger and gave it to him. Amir put it on his finger and in return gave his own to Mehar Nigar. After this, Amar stood up, and with his hands folded asked the Malka's permission to express his wishes. The permission being granted, he represented that while Amir was to be married with Mehar Nigar, why should he not demand the hands of her maid-servant, Fitna Bano. The Malka asked the maid-servant to accept of his hand; she hesitated at first, but when gently persuaded by her mistress, consented to the proposed alliance. Mehar Angez asked Fitna Bano to give something to Amar as a token of her remembrance and she offered him a valuable *utterdan* (a perfume box). When Amar was asked to give her in return something, he readily took out of his pocket a date and a couple of walnuts and making them over to Fitna Bano, asked her to preserve them carefully. The ridiculous act of Amar created an excessive fit of laughter and all present were well-nigh out of breath from the excitement caused.—

Taking leave of the Malka, Amir repaired to the king, who received him with the affection of a son-in-law and invested him with robes. Buzurchemehar then took Amir to his own house, and after giving him paternal instruction, offered him a cup of *sherbet*, which, made him senseless. While Amir lay unconscious, Buzurchemehar took a razor out of his pocket and having cut open one of his sides, put in * *Shahmohra*, and then sewing the wound applied a plaster to it. Mokbil asked the

* An antidote to poison.

Khaja about it, and was informed that in Ceylon somebody would give poison to Amir and he had therefore put an antidote to protect him from its fatal effects. The Khaja warned him not to reveal the secret, until he had received a slap from Amar. Amir was brought to his senses with the aid of some liquid, but he could not make out the operation, as the plaster had quite healed the wound.

Amir took leave of the Khajah and went to his tent. He then proceeded to the sea-shore. The nobles and the dignitaries of the court accompanied him up to the fort-wall and then took leave of him. Amir with all his companions marched to Balsora, where he arrived in a few days. He found the thirty ships ordered by the king, ready and awaiting his arrival. He went on board with thirty thousand soldiers and his companions. Amar came down from the ship and expressed his anxiety to travel by sea. He said, "Amir, I fear very much the genii, and no less the enchantment and water, and cannot therefore accompany you in your voyage to Ceylon. I am going back to Mecca, where I shall stop and pray for your victory. When Amir saw that Amar could by no means be prevailed upon to embark with him, he said, "My friend as you are not willing to go with me, I will not force you against your will, but you must wait till I have written a letter to my father." Amar had no reason to doubt Amir's word and going ashore waited for the letter. The letter being finished, Amir handed it over to Amar. Amar's eyes were bedewed with tears, when he approached Amir to embrace him for the last time. Amir enfolded him to his breast and ordered the captain to set sail. The order was immediately carried out and the ships sailed away. When the ship had left the shore Amar was set free. He ran on the deck frantically, cursing and abusing Amir for deceiving him. Going a little ahead, Amar saw a broad piece of land, which he took for an island, and jumped on it from the ship. It was a whale on which Amar had jumped and no sooner was he on its back, than the fish dived into the water and Amar began to drown. Amir ordered the boatmen to save Amar from drowning, and they plunged their chain and took him out of the water. After this incident Amar retreated to a corner of the ship and sat down quite dejected.

After a few days the ships approached an island and cast anchor. Amar was the first man who went down and began to walk about. When he had gone some distance from the ship,

he saw an old man • with a strap of leather round his waist sitting under a tree. On seeing Amar, he accosted him and said. "Come hither my nephew. It is curious that you happen to be here and have come just in time to help me and receive the wealth, which I have saved from the shipwreck." Amar drew near him and asked what made him call a stranger his relative, to which he replied thus. "You cannot recognize me after a lapse of so many years; I left you an infant, when I embarked on a voyage to Ceylon. I made a large fortune and intended returning to my native land. On my way home, the ship on which I sailed encountered a furious storm, and it was almost wrecked. I found this island and jumped down with a box of jewels. I was much hurt in my legs. The people of this place took compassion on me and carried me to a surgeon, who lived in this island; he not only fed me, but gave me some medicine. I am so far better, that I have trudged up to this place to amuse myself, but I am now quite unable to go back from the pain and exhaustion I feel. I was anxiously looking for some friend to take me home when you appeared. As you are my relative, I have no hesitation in asking you the favour of taking me to my place, where I shall make over to you the box of jewels to which you are entitled." Amar was tempted with the box of jewels and believing the old man, took him upon his back; no sooner he got on the back of Amar, than he sat astride upon his shoulders and clasped his legs nimbly around his waist; he thrust one of his feet against Amar's stomach and striking him rudely on the side with the other, directed him to run. Amar attempted to extricate himself by the hands, but the old ill-natured fellow tightened his hands also and began to beat him on the head and face violently in order to make him run as fast as possible. Amar ran towards Amir for rescue, but found all of them overtaken by similar misfortune. Disappointed, he ran with his rider, and looked for his own plan to get his release. Amir and his companions were also spurred to run like Amar, but Adi was the most unfortunate to lag behind through fatness and stumbled at every step. Amar went some four miles ahead of his companions and casually found several dry calabashes hanging on the tree; he asked his rider to break a larger one and press into it some juice of the grapes, which abounded in the island, and having filled it with the juice, to go on pouring into his mouth that he might run still faster.

When Amar had taken a little juice, he began to sing and

* An aurang-outang.

carried his rider more nimbly and with greater ease than before. The old fellow perceiving the effects, which the drink had produced upon him, set the calabash to his mouth and the juice pleasing his palate, he drank it all off. There being enough of it to fuddle him, he became drunk and the fumes getting up to his head, he began to dance. Amar ran a long race, the old fellow fainted, lost his hold, and fell to the ground. Amar took out his scimitar and tore off his abdomen. Having thus freed himself from the accursed old fellow, Amar returned to Amir, and abused him for having put him to so much troubles. Amir apologized and entreated Amar to release him and his companions. Amar would not be appeased, but when tempted with gold mohurs as a reward for his service, he killed each of the ill-natured fellows with sharp stones.

Amir immediatly went on board and ordered the ships to leave the coast. After two months an island was seen. The captain asked Amir's permission to cast anchor and take fresh provision. On getting orders, he anchored the ships, and the crew landed. The fine scenery of the place induced Amar to take a walk; he came across a tank, the silvery water of which tempted him to take a bath. He took off his clothes and plunged into the water. When he rose to the surface, he found his suit gone. He put the loss down to Amir's pleasantry, and called him aloud. Amir ran to the place considering that Amar had been overtaken by some fresh calamity, and asked him the reason of his troubles. He wanted his dress back, but when Amir denied having taken it, he was bewildered. Causually his eyes fell on a tree on which he found several monkeys seated, each with a cloth in its hand, turning and looking at it with considerable amazement. Amar sent for another suit of clothes and as the monkeys have a natural imitative capacity, he tossed his Nimtaj into the air, which the monkey imitated. Being unable to catch hold of it, it dropped to the ground and Amar took it away. In this way he released all his clothes from the monkeys, and returned with Amir to the ship, which was set sail at once.

After a few days, the sky became overcast and a furious hurricane broke upon the ocean. The bright day was enveloped into a pitchy darkness and huge billows began to dash against the ship's sides. The crew grew anxious for their lives. Amir began to console and encourage them, but without effect. Amar was the more frightened, and began to weep aloud and invoke the mercy of the Providence, and blamed Amir for taking him on the ship against his

will ; he did not let a moment pass without fresh wailings and imprecations, so much so, that he created a sensation on board. By the bye, the wind subsided and the sky became clear. Each and all returned thanks to the Almighty for their deliverance from then impending peril.

Shortly after, Amir was told that Bahram's ship was missing. Amir wept bitterly over the loss of a gallant chieftain and a staunch friend. The people comforted him by saying that the ship had been carried away by the tumultuous waves and would get ashore without meeting any danger.



CHAPTER XXIII.

FALLING OF AMIR'S SHIPS INTO A WHIRPOOL BY A SECOND TEMPEST, THEIR RELEASE FROM DANGER AND ARRIVAL AT CEYLON.

THE ship sailed with a fair wind, there was no mishap and the crew were happy and cheerful. One day the sailors observed the signs of a very strong tempest about to burst upon them; they expressed the greatest anxiety, because the dreadful whirlpool into which Alexander's ships had fallen once, was near at hand, and if the ships were carried into it, they shall all perish. Amar was entirely lost, and a fearful alarm siezed upon the crew. The ships were at last overtaken by a terrific storm. The current soon carried them into the whirlpool. In this hazardous position Amir's eyes casually fell on a pillar of stone in the midst of the whirlpool with a white tablet attached to it containing the following inscription in Arabic. "At a certain time, the ships of Sahebkarān will fall into this whirlpool. He should get up to the top of this pillar either himself or let some of his men go upon it atonce; he will find a drum of Alexander there, which must be beaten with force and the ships will move on." Amir expressed his determination to go upon the pillar, but Amar prevented him and took permission to go himself, his object being to get rid of the danger and find a place of safety on the turret of the pillar, until some vessel should take him back to his country. Taking leave of Amir and his companions he took a leap, but failing to reach the top of the pillar fell into the water, but luckily his feet fell on the teeth of an alligator, which was then yawning. He gathered his senses, made another big jump setting his feet on the teeth and was immediately at the top. He saw a very big drum lying there with Alexander's name inscribed on it. He took up the stick and beat it with all his might. There was a tremendous din, which produced a great tumult in the sea. All aquatic creatures rose to the surface of the water; the birds flew in numbers from the turret of the pillar, and there was so great a disturbance in the sea that the ships safely swept out of the whirlpool, and in the course of a short time reached the coast of Ceylon.

Amar was extremely bewildered when he saw himself alone on the rock with the sea around him. He lost all patience and began weeping aloud and invoking the help of God. Suddenly he heard some one salute him, he was confounded on hearing a human voice, and thought the angel of death had come to take his life and he wept over his misfortune bitterly. While he was in this dilemma, the prophet Khizir appeared. Amar asked his name, and was told that he was Khizir, who had come to release him from his dangerous position. Amar fell at his feet, and asked for something to eat. Khizir gave him a bread and promised to get him some water as well. Amar was offended at the scanty provision which was given him to appease his gnawing hunger, and said that it ill-became his position to keep him half famished in such a rueful condition. Khizir laughed out and said, "Will you eat the bread and try to finish the whole." Amar began eating, but in spite of its small size and his keen hunger, he could not finish the bread, which remained uneaten and in the same state as it was before. The Khizir then gave him a small bag of water to slake his thirst; he drank the water, but the bag notwithstanding remained full. Amar was tempted to take the bread and the bag and asked Khizir to make them over to him for his future use. Khizir consented and making them over to him said that they would be of use to him in difficult times. He then asked Amar to take the drum with all its appliances to Hamzah and make them over to him on his arrival at Ceylon. Amar expressed his inability to carry the heavy load, when the prophet gave him a blanket, to wrap it up and said that it would be no load. As soon as he had rolled up the drum, and taken it over his head, Khizir asked him to put his feet on his own and recite * *Ism-Azam* with his eyes closed. This he did and when he opened his eyes, he found himself on the island of Ceylon. He returned thanks to the Almighty and proceeded in quest of Amir.

When Sahebkaran landed safely on the coast of Ceylon, he ordered his tents to be pitched and expressed his intention to stop for two months in the place, in order to observe the mourning ceremonies for the departed soul of Amar, who was his nearest and dearest friend, and who exposed his life for the good of others. Amir and all his *Sirdars* put on mourning and began to weep and lament for Amar. While things went

on thus, Amar came across a mosque in the wilderness ; there he found five persons offering up prayers whom he joined. When the prayers were over, he found that four persons had steeds to ride on, while the fifth, who had no horse, went on foot. Amar approached this last person, and asked him the reason of his walking, while his companions rode on horse back. To this he replied tenderly, " My kind and affectionate friend, we are all martyrs ; the other four persons, who have just gone, were slain with their steeds, so they have the advantage of them I was alone killed without horse and have therefore no steed to ride on. I might, however, get a horse if you will but assist me." "Willingly will I execute your wishes and bring any comfort you may stand in need of," said Amar submissively, " and the man proceeded as follows." " A short distance from here, there is a village, where you will find my house ; in its compound, there is a tree, under which you will find some two thousand gold-mohurs deposited in a pot ; take out the pot from the ground and divide its contents into three parts ; give one part to my heir's, take the other yourself, and with the third purchase some articles and give them as charity to beggars. This will relieve me from the trouble of walking, and I shall ever be thankful to you for the kindness." Amar took leave of him and going to his house carried out his instructions faithfully. This done, he resumed his journey and after travelling several miles sat down under a tree to refresh himself. Soon after, he found a person standing on his right-hand ; he mentioned himself to be the prophet Elias ; and offering Amar a net and blanket, said that the net could roll up any number of things without tearing, and the blanket, when covered by a man, would render him invisible." Amar received these valuable gifts with gratitude and went on his way. After a few days he reached Amir's encampment, but was troubled to find people dressed in black. He anticipated bad news regarding Amir and asked a stranger about him and the cause of the mourning. In reply he said that Sahebkarān had lost his friend Amar in the bosom of the Sea for whom he was mourning with all his troops and that food was being distributed to the poor, being the the fortieth day after his death.

Amar was touched with Amir's affection for him ; he passed the day among the beggars, who were receiving food and alms on account of his death. At night-fall he covered himself with the blanket given to him by the prophet Elias, entered Madikarab's tent, and finding him fast asleep, jumped on him.

Adi was startled from slumber and asked the invisible who he was. Amar replied, "I am the angel of death. This day I wanted to take Amar to paradise, but he declined to go without you his intimate friend. I reasoned with him that it was not yet time for you to return to heaven, but he would not listen to me. I have therefore come down by the command of God to take your life." Madikarab was bewildered and said that he was a deadly enemy to Amar, he had never been on good terms with him and was always praying for his death." Amar asked Adi to pay him something before he would leave him and Adi immediately pointed to a box of gold mohurs, which he desired him to take and depart. Amar took the box and entered the tents of Sultan Bukht and other chieftains in turn and played the same game with them. Each and all were frightened at the strangeness of the visit and passed the night in terror and alarm. At day break Adi related to Amir the night's adventure, but the latter took it for a nightmare; when all the other chiefs related the same thing, Amir became apprehensive and ordered his tents to be struck. The next night Amar entered Amir's tent and did the same thing with him. Amir was surprised to find that somebody was speaking in human tones without being seen. Amir caught hold of him with one hand and with the other wanted to deal a severe blow, when Amar cast off his blanket and appeared abruptly. Amir was flushed with joy at the sight of his long-lost friend, folded him eagerly to his breast and asked him of his deliverance from the perilous position in which he had been placed. Amar related to him all that had happened, then made over to him Alexander's drum and all the other things he had brought and also showed him the things presented to him by the prophets Khizir and Elias.

The next morning Amir broke his journey and going ahead, encamped at the foot of a mountain. News was afloat that Hamza, the son-in-law of Nowsherawan, had come to fight with Landhour. Amir had arrived at Ceylon just at the time when the fair was being held to celebrate the anniversary of Adam's pardon. On the mount of Ceylon, Adam had descended from heaven and there was a block of stone with marks of his feet, which became, and was then, a place of pilgrimage for Hindus and Mahomedans from distant climes. With Amir's permission Amar proceeded to the hill for amusement, but when he arrived at its foot he could find no way up. While he was in a dilemma as to how he would go up the hill,

his eyes casually fell on a low thatched house close by; he proceeded thither and found a venerable old man engaged in prayer. When relieved, he saluted Amar by name. Amar was surprised to hear his name repeated by a stranger and considering him to be one of the species of the ill-natured fellow, whom he had met on the island, drew his scimitar and attempted to kill him. The venerable gentleman laughed out and said. "Amar, I am not the creature you think me to be, but a descendant of the prophet Noah. My name is Salim, I had a dream last night, and hence came to know your name." So saying, he gave Amar a yard, and pointing out a place, asked him to dig the ground yard deep and take whatever he might find there; he warned him at the same time not to attempt to get more, for he would find nothing beyond his gifted share. Amar followed the instruction and after digging the ground to the depth of a yard found a precious dazzling ruby. Putting the jewel into his pocket, he commenced digging the ground further, but finding nothing more, returned exhausted and disappointed to the reverend gentleman and showed him the ruby. Amar was then asked to go to the top of the hill and visit the foot-prints of Adam. He said there was no way up, when Salim pointed out a by-path and directed him to go up by it without any fear or hesitation.

Amar went to the top of the hill by the path indicated and found a spacious compound enclosed with a wall with a high gate. It had a fine delightful green meadow within it, which was surrounded on all sides by fountains of sweet crystal water, and studded with gigantic trees, whose extensive branches, thick with verdant foliage, formed a strong natural pavilion. On going a little further, he found a large piece of stone, as white as alabaster, on which was Adam's foot-prints. He kissed the stone and rubbed his eyes over it. Around the stone he saw a heap of jewels, which tempted him; he lost no time in rolling up all the jewels in his blanket, but when about to leave the place, the gate disappeared; he turned back heart-broken, and deposited the jewels where he had found them. As soon as this was done, the gate appeared again. Amar intended to make another attempt to take the jewels, and to be more exact, put his Nim-taj at the gateway. With this precaution, he refilled the jewels in his blanket, but when he approached the gate, he found both his Nim-taj and the gate gone. Disappointed and hopeless, he replaced

the jewels and considered Adam extremely miserly with his wealth. As soon as the jewels were restored, the gate appeared and Amar taking the Nim-taj made ablutions and offered prayers. After finishing his prayers, Amar raised his hands towards heaven and invoked the benediction of God, weeping most piteously. In the midst of his lamentations, his eyes were closed and a sort of stupefaction came over him. In his dream he saw a tall old man offering him a garment to put on, saying that it was called *Jameh Deoband*, and would protect him from every calamity, as well as, from the evil influence of the satans and genii. With this garment, he said, is attached a *Zamheel* (wallet), in which any amount of articles would on being deposited immediately disappear, and only those that were needed would be found; and that when he would put his hands on it, and ask in the name of Adam, to be transformed into any shape, he would forthwith be metamorphosed and be able to speak any language he wanted. The venerable gentleman said he was Adam and disappeared. Another man came after him, and offering Amar a cup, asked him to remember the *Ism-Azam*, written on it, which, he said, would be of use to him at some future period of his life. He gave out his name as Issac and disappeared. He was followed by a third gentleman, who said his name was David, and giving Amar a *Dotara* told him that, whenever he played on it, his hearers would be enchanted and their hearts would melt with pathos. The fourth man, who called himself the prophet Saleh, put his hands on Amar's back and said that he would be outstripped by none in running and would always eclipse the speed of the swiftest steed. While Saleh was thus speaking, the fifth man descended from heaven on a dazzling throne. Saleh signified that he was the prophet Mahomed. Amar prostrated himself before him and represented as follows, "My Gracious Lord and Apostle of God. while all the other prophets have offered me various gifts, I beseech you to grant me one of my wishes which I desire the most. I pray that unless I wish to die three times, the angel of death should not be sent down to take my soul." The prophet said that if God granted the prayer, such would come to pass, and with these words he was out of sight. When Amar returned to consciousness, he found the gifted articles beside him. He came down the hill and showed them all to Salim, who congratulated him on his success, and asked him to go back and send Amir.

Amar retraced his steps to his tent. In the way, he wanted

to test the virtue of the *Zambeel*; he put his hands on it and said. "In the name of Adam let me become taller than usual and my complexion jet black." He soon found himself above the ordinary height of a man, and his face changed into the darkness of night. Fear took possession of him lest the change might be permanent and he at once put his hands on the *Zambeel* and asked to be restored to his former state, where-upon he found himself as before, fair and beautiful. He was rejoiced in the chameleon-like power at his disposal and touching once more the *Zambeel* transformed himself and he went to Amir's tent. On reaching the tent he began to play on the David's Dotara. All who heard him were spell-bound. The news was brought to Amir, who immediately came out to see the stranger, and was no less charmed with his music. Amir asked him who he was, and he said, "I am known as Mahmood Seah-tun, or black-faced. I am employed under Landhour, but he does not give me enough to satisfy my wants, or else, I would have not come to beg of others".

Amir was so charmed with the minstrelsy, that he ordered Sultan Bukht to take the man to his treasury that he might take as much treasure and jewels as he was able to carry away. Sultan Bukht carried out the orders, but lo! the stranger loaded all the treasure-chests in a net and putting the load on his head moved on towards the hills nimbly. Sultan Bukht was thunderstruck with the strangeness of the event, and stopping the man went to inform Amir. The account given by Sultan Bukht soon convinced Amir that the stranger was no other than Amar, who had been instructed with some novel stratagem; he sent for him and taking him aside, asked him if he was not his friend Amar, transformed into his present shape. Amar smiled and regaining his original appearance, related to Amir all that had happened to him and how Salim had called him to receive his gifts.

The next morning Amir proceeded towards the hills with Amar and his retinue. In the way he came across a fine clean square ground, which was Landhour's gymnasium. He tried several feats successfully, but in spite of his herculean strength, he could not move the unwieldy war-club of Landhour, which grieved him much. He considered himself incapable of coping with his rival and crushed and dispirited went to Salim.

After embracing Amir, Salim gave him the same yard, which he had given to Amar and instructed him to dig a particular place and bring him whatever he found under-ground. Amir acted accordingly and found a ruby which he brought to Salim and showed him. Salim was rejoiced and asked Amir to go to the top of the hill and kiss the foot-prints of Adam and get his share of the gifts. Amir went on the hill according to Salim's directions, and after kissing the foot-prints of Adam engaged himself in prayer. While thus engaged, a sort of stupefaction came over him, and he saw in a dream a throne descending from heaven, on which were seated several venerable men with appearances as bright and dazzling as the stars. One of them, who was taller than the others, gave Amir a *Bazooband* (bracelet) and said, 'Put this bracelet on your right arm. By this, your fingers and arms will remain untwisted and unbent by your enemy and the stroke of your sword will fall freely on your rival's head, however tall he may be and out of your reach; but do not let your drum of war be beaten first, nor attack your enemy, unless he uses his weapon thrice against you. Protection should be afforded to those who crave your mercy; the heart-broken treated with lenity; the run-aways must not be pursued; and the beggars go without attention. You will exterminate idolatry, and carry the banner of *Islam* far and wide through the length and breadth of the world, but never boast of your gallantry, nor attempt to trample upon the prostrate. Beware of making a cry of *Allah O Akber*, unless it is absolutely necessary, for your cry will resound through some sixteen *farsangs* and the hearers will be affected thereby.' The venerable man, who was no other than Adam, folded Amir to his breast and departed.

In the ebullition of joy Amir awoke from the trance, and after performing his service of thanks-giving retraced his steps to Salim's cottage and related to him all about his dream. Salim congratulated him and said that he had been waiting all this time to render this important service to him; he would now leave the world and retire to the abode of the blest. So saying, he stretched himself on the floor and breathed his last. Amir wept over him and after performing the funeral rites according to the advice of the deceased left the place. Returning to Landhour's gymnasium he tried his strength again and lifted up the heavy war-club with infinite ease.

Happy and joyful Amir returned to his tent and distri-

buted immense treasures to the poor, needy and indigent. The news of Amir's feat was brought to Landhour's notice, who instantly repaired to the gymnasium and found to his utter surprise his huge war-club removed. As he could not find out the man who had tried his strength, he left the place, ordering his servants to bring the prodigy of strength to him when he happened to come again.

While Landhour returned to his court, Amar with the pretext of amusement took leave of Amir and sallied forth from the tent. He bent his way to the court of Landhour, and assuming the appearance of a native of Khorasan reached the entrance gate and stood on the threshold with his *Dotara* in his hand. The chobdar asked him who he was and he said that he had come along with the son-in-law of Nowsherawan and wanted to pay his respects to Landhour, who was known to be a kind man and a great admirer of skilful men. The steward of the court brought this to the notice of Landhour, who ordered the stranger to be brought to him, and Amar was immediately ushered into his presence.

Landhour was surprised to find in Amar a peculiar genius; he asked him his name, profession and nationality to which Amar replied thus, "My name Sir, is *Baba zad o burd* and my ancestors are the inhabitants of Khorasan." Landhour was astonished to hear such a curious name and said, "You have got an extraordinary name, for the two words, 'Zad' and 'Burd' mean *beat* and *rob*, which signify that you beat people and rob them of their property." "Yes, my lord," replied Amar significantly, "you are not in the least mistaken, for I strike the strings of my *Dotara*, and rob the hearts of my hearers." Landhour was pleased to hear Amar speaking thus, and ordered him to play on his guitar. Amar began to sing along with his *Dotara* with such effect that the king and his courtiers were simply charmed. Landhour asked him what he wanted as a reward, but he declined the offer saying, that he had been abundantly paid by the son-in-law of Nowsherawan, with whom he had come, and he continued his heart-stirring melody. After a while, Landhour repeated his desire to reward him, but he still declined to take any thing and said, that he did not require wealth with which he had been amply provided by his master, but if the king permitted him he would do the service of a cup-bearer. The cup and decanter being made over to Amar, he began circulating the wine. When he had gone round with the

cup severalth times and found Landhour and his companions sufficiently fuddled, he stole one of the emerald peacocks, which adorned the throne. This act of Amar did not, however, go unnoticed by Landhour, who although inebriated, asked him why he stole a peacock from his throne, but Amar ogled him to be silent that the others might not hear of it. Landhour laughed out at his apparent effrontery in stealing his own thing and then directing him to be quiet, and pleased with his wit allowed him to take also the other peacocks, which he handled with a profound bow. Amar took advantage of Landhour's inebriety and the inattentiveness of his courtiers and taking imperceptibly out of his pocket a quantity of intoxicating drug mixed it with the wine, which he gave Landhour and his companions to drink. In an instant all fell prostrate to the ground and when Landhour was thus unconscious, Amar robbed him of all his furniture and properties and putting them into his *Zamheel* (wallet) hastened to his tent.

While Amar was engaged in picking out and assorting the property plundered, Amir ordered his man to look for him, as he was absent for a long time, and bring up to him in whatever condition he was found. The people going to his tent found him engaged in arranging a variety of articles and classifying them according to their respective value. The errand of Sahebkarān was communicated and he was at once taken over to him with all his illgotten belongings. Sahebkarān asked him how and whence he got so many things and he said that Landhour had given them to him as reward. Amir did not believe him and the next morning sent Adi to Landhour with certain presents and all the properties brought by Amar along with a letter to the following effect, "It has come to my notice that Amar had been to your court last night whence he has brought an immense hoard of furniture and other articles, which he has perhaps robbed of you; he says that you have presented them to him, but as he is little to be trusted, I am sending the things back to you with some choice presents, which I hope you will kindly accept. If Amar has shown you any misconduct, I must be informed that I may punish him."

At day break, when Landhour came to his senses, he found his court completely desolated. He asked his men about the man who called himself *Zad, O, burd*, but no one could tell where he was gone. Landhour found a billet suspended from his neck: he opened it and found that the man was no other than

Amar, who had found his way into his court the night previous. Landhour took his bath and ordered his court to be refurnished. While this was going on, Adi appeared with Amir's letter. The chobdars brought the fact to the notice of Landhour and Adi was immediately ushered into his presence. With a respectful bow he handed over Amir's letter to the king and placed before him also all that he had brought with himself. Landhour received the presents sent by Amir, but returned all other things saying that he had excused Amar and would gladly let him have the property taken by him. He added that nothing had been done to turn his mind against Amar, but that he was anxious to see him in his original appearance and should be glad if he were sent to him in that state. With these words he let Adi depart with a set of gorgeous robes.

Adi returned to Amir, and reported to him all that was said to him. Amir was pleased with Landhour's behaviour and returning to Amar the stolen goods sent back by Landhour, directed him to appear before the king in his natural shape. Amar was overjoyed on the goods being restored to him and keeping them all in his tent proceeded towards the court of Landhour. In the way he found several merchants going with plenty of rich and beautiful articles. One of them had a valuable crown in his hand inlaid with precious jewels. Assuming the garb of a merchant, Amar mixed with the party, and along with them went to the court of Landhour. The crown was approved of by Landhour and he ordered his casheer to pay the price to the merchants and let them go. At this time Amar appeared from among the merchants and said that the king must not put the crown on his head unless the bargain was definitely settled. Landhour immediately returned the crown and asked his steward to take it over to the merchants and set its proper value. The steward returned it to the merchants and began to bargain, when Amar interjected that he would fix the price in broad day-light, and so saying he took the crown from the steward's hand, came out of the antechamber and looking towards the sky said abruptly, "behold a thick cloud on the sky, which prognosticates a tremendous storm about to burst upon the land." The people raised their heads towards the sky, and while so engaged, Amar took to his heels. The men found him running with the crown; they brought the fact at once to the notice of Landhour, who immediately mounted on an elephant and pursued him.

Amar did not fly by the main road, but took a bye-path, when he entered a bush in which he lost his course. Finding himself closely followed by Landhour, he became distracted and bewildered. Casually he caught a glimpse of a cottage in the bush; there he threaded his way and found a man grinding the mill; he immediately accosted him and said, "Do you care to know from me that Landhour had a bad dream last night; the interpreters have spoken to him that the only relief for the king is to get a drum made from the head skin of a grinder and to beat it himself; so the people are coming behind me to seize and decapitate you". The man was appalled and dismayed, and asked Amar what he would do to save himself. "I would advise you," said Amar hastily, "to plunge into that pond and let me have your sheet that I might wrap it round my waist and resume your place and do whatever I find proper to save my life". The poor man made over his cloth to Amar in all haste and dived into the water; while Amar took his seat and began grinding the mill calmly.

By this time Landhour arrived and entering the cottage asked the fictitious grinder as to whether he had seen a man coming that side. "Yes", he said readily, "a man has just come panting and plunged himself into the water." Landhour underssed himself, and while he entered the water to catch hold of the poor man, Amar took his clothes and going to his cashier said to him. "Landhour wants from you two hundred rupees atonce, and has given his dress to be shown to you in case of doubt." The cashier gave the money to him without hesitation, and Amar made off with it and returned to his tent safe and sound.

Landhour dragged the grinder out of the water; the poor fellow in attempting to resist received a severe wound on his head. When taken out of the pond, he began to mutter wildly. "My head having received a severe cut is useless for a drum, the skin of the head of some other grinder should be looked for." Landhour was astonished to hear him talking thus and finding him an altogether different man, left him and coming out of the cottage, asked his followers if they had seen any body emerging from the cottage. "We have seen no one leaving the cottage", said they, "except the man to whom your majesty was pleased to make over your suit as a proof of your having sent him for two hundred rupees to your cashier." Landhour was immediately convinced that the man was no other than Amar.

and dressing himself with a new suit proceeded direct to Amir's tent.

Amir was informed by his men that Landhour was coming to him unarmed and single-handed. When he approached, Amir came out of his tent to receive him. Landhour was seated on a chair inlaid with jewels and when he had occupied his seat, he said to Amir. "I am very anxious to see Amar in his original appearance, for whenever he goes to me, he goes in an assumed shape and plays me plenty of tricks." Amar was sent for instantly and on appearing before Landhour made a profound bow and took his seat. After the exchange of a few cups of wine, Amir ordered Amar to play on his *Dotara* and sing. He acquitted himself so well, that all were ravished with the music. Landhour folded him to his breast and made over to him a necklace of pearls in addition to the crown, which he also allowed him to take.

When the sun went down the horizon, Landhour took leave of Amir with an affectionate embrace and at the time of leaving expressed his intention of giving him a cordial entertainment in return. Amir declined his offer gently, saying that he had come to fight him and therefore no such friendly feeling should exist between. Landhour insisted on Amir to give up his intention of fighting, but the latter remained faithful to his word and with gentle excuses declined. Landhour therefore returned to his court sorrowful and ordered the drum of war to be sounded, which was soon answered by the crushing sound of Alexander's drum from Amir's tent. There was a sepulchral din of war all night on both sides and a tumultuous agitation began in both armies preparing for the approaching conflict. The weak staggered at the dismal sound of the drum, while the braves were animated with fresh vigour to show their valour in the battle-field and encouraged others to the battle. In short, there was a great stir on both sides; the clatter of the arms broke the stillness of the night and a considerable sensation prevailed amongst the soldiers for the grand struggle of the morning.

At the first glimmer of dawn, Amir rose up, made ablutions and having offered up his prayer, appeared on the field in all his majestic pride, surrounded by his chosen troops; while on the other hand, Landhour, equipped in his military uniform, emerged at the head of his army and took up his position on

the opposite side. At this juncture a cloud of dust was observed at a short distance, which being cleared by the wind, there appeared forty flags, which led a detachment of forty thousand mounted soldiers. When the army was drawn close, Amir found it was headed by Gustaham. Amir pointed him out to Amar, who soon bethought himself of some smooth trickery, and approaching Gustaham saluted him profoundly. "How fares it with you Khaja," addressed Gustaham at last to Amar tenderly, "I have not seen you for a long time past." "What should I say about myself," replied Amar mournfully. "I have been ruined out-right in the service of the Arab, who has reduced me to a straw." "Why do you say so?" exclaimed Gustaham hopefully, "you speak of something which has broken your heart." "To tell you the truth," answered Amar affectedly, "since Hamzah has been called the son-in-law of Nowsherawan, he has grown too presumptuous to care for any one; he used to flatter me formerly, but now he has become so conceited that he would not notice me in the least. I must not tell you how much have I done to secure his wishes and what troubles have I suffered for his sake. I have now resolved upon leaving his service and going elsewhere." "Why should you go destitute and forlorn wandering about the world," said Gustaham earnestly, "you shall have every indulgence with me and you may freely enter my service whenever you like." "I have come to you with a similar wish", responded Amar seemingly touched, "and nothing would be more gratifying to me than to accept of the service of one who appreciates merit and knows how to reward labour. I must however advise you to fight Landhour first, so that Amir may not have the opportunity of gaining the day and twining the laurel of glory around his head. Landhour is not a very powerful man, as has been bruited abroad, and I quite fancy you will overtake him easily." "You have done well to come to me in time to inform me of the real aspect of the affair. I must kill Landhour and then fall on Amir and kill him too. The object of my coming here is perhaps not known to you, and as you are now entering my service, I hesitate not to tell you that ever since I assaulted Amir, I had taken refuge in Zabul and been passing my days in lively seclusion, when I received a letter from Nowsherawan, in which he requested me to march to Ceylon at once and kill Landhour and Amir and get his daughter Mehar Nigar in marriage. Rest assured, therefore, that I shall acquit myself well in this expedition and bring home to you the object of your heart."

Thus buoyed up by Amar, Gustaham came to the field on

his rhinoceros and challenged Landhour defiantly to show the glare of his sword. Landhour urged his elephant forward and coming to Gustaham face to face defied him to use his weapon. Gustaham assailed Landhour with his sword, but the latter received the blow on his war-club, and in return sent his war-club whizzing on his head. Luckily the blow missed, but a partial stroke of the war-club broke several ribs of Gustaham, which brought him to the ground, and his troopers lifting him up hastily beat a retreat.

The conflict between Amir and Landhour was postponed that day and both returned to their tents to recreate themselves. Gustaham retreated to the hills and kept himself concealed in a valley with the intention of way-laying Amir in case he returned by that way and killing him on the spot.



CHAPTER XXV.

BATTLE BETWEEN LANDHOUR AND AMIR.

A PITCHED battle seemed imminent and immense was the enthusiasm which prevailed among the soldiers on either side. The night was passed in great hubbub, and when the morning dawned the troops were drawn into files. The two armies appeared on the field armed to the teeth. Amir spurred his charger and coming face to face with Landhour said. "It is no use shedding the blood of so many of our men, when there is a trial between you and myself." Landhour agreed to single combat and asked Amir to begin the assault, but the latter declined, and said that unless he assailed him thrice, he would not wield his sword under the directions of his instructor. Inspired by a friendly feeling towards Amir, Landhour laid aside his monster war-club and darted his lance against Amir, but the blow was cleverly warded off and Amir was unhurt. The lance-fighting went on vehemently for some time, but when neither party could be overpowered, Landhour laid it aside in disgust and took up his huge war-club. Before, however, he wielded this instrument, Landhour repeated his entreaties to Amir to abandon his intention of fighting with him, but he remained inexorable and expressed emphatically his determination of fighting for the cause of Nowsherawan to whom he was pledged by promise. When all remonstrances failed, Landhour seated himself cross-legged and balancing his crushing war-club assailed Amir with it. Sahebkarán received the blow on his shield, and although he perspired from the very roots of his hair, his arm remained unbent from the effect of the bracelet given him by Adam. Landhour admired Amir's strength, and made a second attack with all his might, but without effect. Failing in two of his repeated attacks, Landhour lost all patience and assailed Amir a third time with the courage of an infuriated beast. Amir warded off the blow as gallantly as before, but his steed sunk to the ground knee-deep and Sahebkarán was lost in a cloud of dust. A joy of triumph was suffused on Landhour's appearance, and he made a boastful yell, "there he is killed and powerded, but I pity his youth". Amir recovering his senses, spurred his animal and was soon out of the dust. "Landhour! come to your senses and speak not such

nonsense," retorted Amir coldly, "I am still alive, safe and sound, and challenge you to make another attempt." Landhour was astonished at Amir's supernatural power and dismounting from his elephant, unsheathed his ponderous sword and rushing forward furiously assailed him once more, but Amir received the stroke on his shield and escaped unhurt. "You have already made five attempts against me, but without success," said Amir to Landhour, "it is now my turn to wield the sword." Take care, therefore, of yourself, so that you may not say that you have been taken by surprise." So saying, Amir dashed his noble charger, and approaching Landhour assailed him with his sword with such effect that it cut the shield into two, and falling on his steed severed its head from the body. Landhour came to the ground, and like a provoked monster ran with his drawn sword on Amir. Finding Landhour horseless, Amir jumped off his steed quickly and tearing the sword from his hand threw it towards his armed array. Both these gallants fell together and began measuring their strength one against the other. All manner of atheletic exercises were gone through, but the one could not overpower the other. For three days and nights the two wrestled together, torches and flambeaus burning during the nights. On the fourth day, Amir made a yell of *Alla o akber*, and with one violent jerk raised Landhour from the ground breast-high. Being unable to lift him higher up, Amir intended to plunge his sword into his bosom, but Landhour caught his hand and acknowledged himself defeated. Amir folded Landhour to his bosom, and asked him to accompany him to Nowsherawan, to which he readily assented. Landhour introduced his nobles and sirdars and with all his companions embraced the faith of Islam. He gave a sumptuous banquet to Amir and his followers, and entertained them with all sorts of amusements in his palace.

While Amir was thus engaged with Landhour, Gustaham, who had concealed himself in the valley of a mountain hard by, was informed of his success over Landhour. He took advantage of Amir's rejoicings with Landhour and bethought himself of poisoning him. He had brought with himself two maid servants of Mehar nigar, who were chosen to be made the tools of his foul deed. Gustaham gave them two bottles of wine mixed with a deadly poison and said, "Put on traveller's dress, proceed to Amir with a letter and these bottles of wine; say that you have brought them from Mehar Nigar and while delivering the letter and bottles to him, recount her love-tales

atonce. But before you do so, go to Mokbil and through him get your admission to Amir. If you acquit yourselves well in this affair, I assure you, that I will take you both for my mistresses." Thus induced by Gustaham, the two maids repaired to Amir's tent. The guards asked them as to who they were, and on hearing they were Mehar Nigar's attendants, they immediately conducted them to the presence of Mokbil, who repaired forthwith to Amir and informed him of their arrival. The impatient heart of Amir was stirred up and without exchanging another word, he left the court, excusing himself to Landhour for his temporary absence. Coming to his tent, he sent for the two ladies into a private apartment and after making the necessary inquiries regarding the Malka's health, took the forged letter from them, kissed it, and having read its contents was so much lost in (what was to him) blissful reveries, that he poured down the contents freely into his throat. The poisonous wine had an instant effect. Amir fell senseless to the ground and phlegms came over his lips with a painful convulsion in his limbs. When the maid-servants saw that they had accomplished their work successfully, they left the tent by the back-wall dislodging one of the pegs in their haste. On their way to Gustaham, they went rejoicing inwardly at the prospect of their future aggrandizement and happy days.

Landhour looked for Amir's return anxiously, but when time glided by and the hour was late, he asked Amar to go and fetch him, as the entertainment looked gloomy without him. Amar atonce proceeded to Amir's tent, and meeting Mokbil asked him about Amir. Mokbil told him all about the arrival of Malka's maid-servants and said that Amir had sought privacy with them. On hearing the names of the maids, Amar's heart throbbed and a vague suspicion took possession of him. He did not tarry a moment, but entered the tent and found it dark, as the lights had all been put out. Readily he rekindled the lamps with a match, but lo ! there lay Amir stretched on the ground senseless, foaming and dashing his limbs in mortal agony, the boils already all over his delicate skin. A bottle of wine lay broken in pieces on one side ; while on the other, was another bottle untouched. Amar looked about the tent in strange bewilderment, but no body was to be seen. Suddenly his eye fell on the backwall of the tent and finding a peg dislodged was soon convinced that the two women had effected their escape that way. He immediately followed their track and overtook them in a moment. They were walking leisurely and talking freely

about their success and the prospect of receiving the embraces of Gustaham. Amar heard them distinctly, drew his scimitar and beheaded them on the spot. Having killed them, he retraced his steps back and taking Mokbil inside the tent, shewed him Amir and upbraided him for his neglect. Mokbil bent his head vehemently at the treacherous act of the women, but Amar urged him to be quiet, lest the troopers of Landhour might hear of the accident and take advantage of the occasion.

So saying and leaving Mokbil in charge of Amir, Amar went to Landhour and spoke to him that Amir was unable to come, being engaged with two of the Nowsherawan's *Sirdars*. "They have brought a letter from the king, proceeded he, asking Amir to bring you fettered. I have therefore been sent by him to ask you confidentially if you have any objection; there will of course be no harm done to you in any way." "I have not the least objection," said Landhour boldly, "to submit to whatever I am asked to do for the sake of Amir and I gladly offer myself to be his captive to be produced before the king." "Will not your troopers revolt and create a disturbance on seeing you a prisoner?" asked Amar inquiringly. "No there can be no such thing in my army," answered Landhour readily, "and I shall arrange to preserve order in all its integrity." So saying, Landhour rose and proceeded to the camp of Amir with both his hands tied up with a hand-kerchief.

Amar conducted him into a tent, which he had arranged for his reception, and showed all marks of courtesy and hospitality to him. While thus engaged, Amar offered him a cup of wine mixed with an intoxicating drug, which had the desired effect and Landhour fell prostrate to the ground. He was immediately chained and put into an air-tight sandal-wood box. This done, Amar emerged from the tent to look for Amir's remedy. In the way, he met two men on horse-back. He intended to elude them, but could not do so. The horsemen accosted him, and when he approached them, they dismounted from their steeds and embraced him affectionately. Amar asked them who they were, and they replied as follows, "We are the sons of Shahpal Hindee. We have been out in quest of you. Our names are Sabir and Sabur. My father, although he professes himself to be a Musulman, is really an idolator. Hearing that Amir had been poisoned, he had gone to help Gustaham. We have therefore come to remove Amir into our fort, so as to secure him proper medical aid in a safe and solitary

place. Amar was rejoiced on this providential succour and asked them if there was no treachery in their noble efforts. They swore in the name of God and Amar led them into his tent.

At midnight Amar placed Amir on a litter and accompanied by the two princes entered their fort safely. After making the necessary arrangements, he asked Sabir and Sabur as to the best means to be employed for the treatment of Amir. "Some ten day's journey hence," said they, "there lives a very expert physician by name Aklimoon, in an islands, called Naroon. I give you this letter to him; go and fetch the man, for if he comes here, Amir is sure to recover". Amar was at first a little puzzled to make so long a journey and then, perhaps, to return in time to find Amir alive, but there was no alternative, and he made up his mind and according to the instructions given him, he set out for the place, where the physician was said to reside. Gifted, as he was, with elasticity of limbs and a swiftness of flight, he soon finished his journey and crossing a river that intercepted his path, arrived at the island named. Assuming the appearance of an Indian, he plunged into the market and ascertained from a man the physician's house. "There," he said, "lives the renowned man, the gate that you see yonder is the gate of his house. Go there direct and call on the physician".

Arriving at the doctor's gate, Amar asked the gate-keeper to inform him of his having brought a letter from Sabir and Sabour. The gate-keeper informed his master accordingly and Amar was ushered into his presence. Amar made a profound bow and handed over the letter. The physician frowned on reading its contents, and ejaculated, "The fellows have written to me to say that if I could arrive atonce and cure Hamzah, they would fill my purse. Good God! they have considered me avaricious, else they would not have written to me thus. I would have surely gone to see the patient, had they not sent to me a tempting letter, but now I must refuse their request absolutely and atonce". Hearing the physician speaking thus, Amar said calmly. "Sir, the princes have been no doubt guilty in not addressing you as they ought to have; but may excuse, pardon their mistake and order a conveyance, as the malady is too delicate and requires prompt attention. The physician was displeased at Amar's intercession and said fretfully, "Beware of your impertinence: you are transgressing the bounds of civility: you are no body to say aught in this affair: I can-

not possibly change my mind : go and look about your business," "Pray think over the matter again," responded Amar submissively, "and prepare yourself for the journey. It is necessary, it is charity, that you should go and save the life of a man, who is dying for want of medical aid, and I cannot say how much your services are needed on this occasion." "I am determined not to go, however important and however urgent the affair may be," retorted the physician angrily. "What law is there," exclaimed Amar indignantly, "to excuse a physician for holding back, while a person is in need of his aid, and is dying for want of medical treatment?" "Who are you," vociferated the physician peevishly, "that you have come to show me your laws and rules?" Are you a *Kazi* or a *Mooftee* that I should be guided by you? You are no more than an humble courier, and you must not rack my brains with idle rigmaroles." Avaunt!" "I cannot go back without taking you," answered Amar doggedly, "the matter is too serious and I crave of you earnestly to order a conveyance atonce and accompany me." "Are you mad or an idiot," ejaculated the physician coldly, "that you parley words with me utterly regardless of your lowly position? Keep yourself within proper limits and be silent." "Sir, a mad man is always pursued by a number of shouting urchins, I have come from so long a distance, but no one has even snapped his fingers at or behind me. I am surprised that you should call me mad." These words of Amar roused the pent-up feeling of the physician, and he ordered his slaves to pinion and thrash Amar severely.

When Amar found himself unsafe, he began making abject entreaties and said. "All that I have ventured to say for the patient was under the instructions of my masters and not from me. I have only acquitted myself of the duty I was ordered to perform and I hope you will kindly excuse me if I have in any way attempted to wound your feelings. As, however, you are unwilling to go, I will not bother you further, but pray let me pass the night here, as the journey is long and tedious and darkness is closing in upon us. Tomorrow at day break, I will depart and will tell the princes all that you have said." The physician was pleased and ordered his servants to give Amar a place in the cook-room and let him depart peaceably in the morning.

When Amar was given a place in the cook-room, he pondered over the best means to be adopted to carry the physi-

cian to the Fort of Sabir and Sabour. He therefore entered into friendly conversation with the cook, and with smooth and flattering words ingratiated himself into his favour. When he found the cook sufficiently gained over, he offered him a few sweetmeats to taste. The cook thanked him fervently and after tasting the sweetmeats extolled its flavour. Amar was not idle in exaggerating their quality, and the credulous cook was soon lost in his varnished tale. When Amar found the cook in good humour, he led him into a closet, and gave him a cake to eat saying that it was no less palatable than the sweets. The fellow having tasted the sweetmeats so eagerly had no reason to doubt the excellence of the bread and swallowed atonce the piece offered. The sweets and bread were compounded with intoxicating drugs, so that the two things getting down his throat produced a thrilling sensation and the man began to move to and fro from their effects. Finding him under the influence of the drug, Amar drew back a few paces and changing his tone began to curse and abuse him vehemently. The cook bounded forward with a stick in his hand to beat Amar, but staggered and fell heavily to the ground. Amar dug the fire-pit deep, and interring therein the body of the cook, assumed his appearance and burning wood on the grave began preparing a splendid collation for the doctor. A variety of choicest viands were seasoned with the mixture of some flavoury ingredients which Amar had about him in his wallet, and the next morning they were served up before the master of the house. The Doctor was much pleased with the elegance and flavour of the various dishes and applauded the servitor for his professional skill, promising at the same time to instruct him further in the art of cookery. "Don't you talk nonsense, O' inconsiderate man, in spite of all your sagacity and wisdom," replied Amar harshly. The Doctor was enraged at the insolent retort of the so-called cook, and rising from his seat sprang forward to catch him, but fell flat to the ground and swooned. Amar wrapped the Doctor in his magic blanket, and depositing his inanimate form on the couch, as if he had gone to refresh himself after meal, took the remainder of the dinner back to the cook-room, and made all the attendants eat it freely. When all fell senseless and the coast was clear, Amar returned to the Doctor's chamber and collected and deposited in his wallet all his books, apparatus and the furniture of his apartment. He then took the Doctor's seal out of his box and sealed a passport in the name of the ferry farmer, directing to cross him (Amar) the moment he arrived on the bank of the river.

Having thus arranged, Amar left the place in haste with the Doctor's load on his back and crossing over the river, reached the fort of Sabir and Sabour safely. He found the fort beleaguered by Gustaham on one side, and the troopers of Londhour on the other, the garrison showering bullets and fire from the parapet. Amar plunged into the thickest of the army unknown and unrecognized and getting to the bastion of the fort, cast his scaling-ladder, and in the twinkling of an eye was within the fort. Going to the princes, he laid before them the Doctor's load, and related to him how he had brought the man up with him. The princes admired Amar's activity, and praised him for his wisdom and keen sensibility.

Amar arranged all the Doctor's furniture, books and other things in a comfortable room, and having set every thing in order brought him to consciousness. When he awoke, he found before him the same courier of Sabir and Sabour entreating and imploring him to attend on his patient, (for Amar had reappeared before him in the shape of a peon), and irritated at the perverse and obstinate importunities of a mean fellow, called out his men to turn him out. The Doctor roared and kicked in vain for his servants to attend. There was no one to answer his call, while Amar's controversy with him reached a serious crisis. The Doctor became puzzled, looked round in dismay and found himself quite in a different compartment with no body to attend him.

While the Doctor was in this dilemma, Sabir and Sabour entered the room and saluted him. The Doctor asked them as to how he happened to be there with all his books and furniture and when he was informed that Amar had brought him, he was thunderstruck at Amar's genius, and embracing him said. "Khajah! had I known that you had gone to bring me, I would have surely come without demur." "I quite fancy your noble feeling," answered Amar affectedly, "but let by-gones be by-gones, look to your patient atonce and cure him radically—an obligation which we shall remember with gratitude ever and anon." Seeing Amir, the Doctor rubbed his hands in grief and said that the antidote for this disease was only with Nowsherawan. Amar was very much distracted and asked the Doctor about the nature of the medicine he wanted. "The antidote I mean is *Shah Mohra*," replied the physician calmly, and this can only be got in the court of Nowsherawan, who has received this invaluable gift in lineal descent from his fore-

feathers : unless this medicine is procured, Hamza can by no means be cured, for the poison has entered his vitals." The proverb that until an antidote is brought from *Irak*, the serpent-bitten man is dead, is just applicable here," responded Amar in poignant grief ; it is impossible that Amir should remain alive by the time the antidote is procured from the court of Nowsherawan." The recovery of Amir depends on that particular medicine," replied the Doctor touched with the distressful scene, "else his case is hopeless and we can do nothing to restore him to health.

Amar was bewildered, lost and confounded. Crying and screaming he left Amir with the physician and set out for Madayen. At the gate of the fort, he found Mokbil standing. The latter asked him about the Doctor's treatment, to which Amar replied with a profound sigh that all his labours were lost, for the Doctor had said that the only antidote for Amir's recovery was *Shah Mohra*, which could only be had with Nowsherawan. Mokbil gave no reply, but when Amar proceeded a few paces onward, he cried aloud and said. "Khaja, as you are going to Madayen, will you kindly tender my compliments to an old woman living at the gate of Nowsherawan's palace." Irritated at Mokbil's unceremonious interruption, Amar turned back in a fury and struck him so violently on the head that he was besmeared with blood. "Don't you be angry Khajah, at my conduct, which though disagreeable, is not without some meaning," said Mokbil in a soft and flattering voice, "the antidote for which you go to Nowsherwan is here." Amar was the more incensed at his dogged attempt to interrupt his journey, and began growing impatient and abusive. "Don't you disbelieve me, Khaja, for a moment," replied Mokbil in all earnestness, "I assure you that what you want is here and with me." Saying this, Mokbil informed him the fact of Buzurchemehar's placing a piece of *Shah mohra* on one of the sides of Amir, as a precaution against poison, which he long anticipated, and his warning him at the same time not to give out the secret until he was struck.

Hearing this, Amar was overjoyed and returning to the physician, recounted to him all that he had heard from Mokbil. The physician touched the part referred to, and actually saw a stone sewed up in one side of Hamzah's body, the skin of the place having undergone no change from the effects of the poison. Amir would have long died," said the physician

joyfully, "had not the antidote been cautiously placed where he found it." So saying, the Doctor procured a large basin of milk and taking out the antidote and fastening it with a silk thread poured it down the throat of Amir, until it reached the stomach. After a few moments it was taken out and dropped into the milk, which immediately turned blue. This process was continued every five or six minutes until Amir sneezed and a change came over his skin. The Doctor then spread over Amir several sheets of linen and began to use restoratives to bring him to consciousness warning every one about him not to mention the word *poison* in Amir's presence. After a few moments, Amir perspired freely, until his cushion was wet through and through and the next morning, he opened his eyes and was hungry. The Doctor at once gave him some nutritious broth, which restored him to his proper senses. Reclining on a cushion, he asked about Landhour, and Amar went back to him instantly, took off his chains and brought him to his senses. In the way he related to him all that had happened with Amir and apologized for his treatment of him, stating that the fear of revolt induced him as a precautionary measure to chain him as he had done.

When Landhour and all the other nobles and sirdars appeared before Amir, presents were offered and alms distributed to beggars and mendicants. Finding the physician a strange person Amir asked who he was. Adi could no longer hold the secret and unravelled to him the mysteries about the maid-servants, who had attempted his life by poisoning him at the instigation of Gustaham, the timely succour he received at the hands of Sabir and Sabour, and the necessity of bringing a physician from the distant isle of *Naron* for the purpose of treating him. He added that Gustaham, perhaps, believing that the maid-servants had accomplished their diabolical work, had besieged the fort, and been fighting with the garrison irresistibly. Landhours, martial blood was roused and he determined on giving a signal blow to that feeble pretender; but Amir wished him to be quiet and let the matter be decided by him. While things were going on thus, information was brought of Shahpal's coming to Gustaham's aid, and his receiving a death blow at the hands of his eldest son Sabir. It was also reported that on the death of Shahpal, Gustaham had made a dreadful havoc on the fort with all his force and was about to cross the entrenchment and reach the fort-wall. Hearing this, Amir asked Amar to go and speak to Gustaham that he must retire without advancing.

an inch forward, else his punishment would be severe. Amar spoke to Gustaham accordingly, but the fellows fully convinced of Amir's death, simply doffed him a pretender, saying that he was not to be prevailed upon by such false machinations. Amar returned and told Amir what he had said. Amir was inflamed with rage, but before he took any step, asked Amar to go back once more, and say to Gustaham that he must remember how his bones were cracked, when he first came to embrace him, and if he would not still understand himself, death would alone decide his cause. Amar went back and told Gushtaham accordingly, who doubted the safety of Amir no more, and apprehending a dreadful vengeance, retreated, crushed and crest-fallen, to a place called Sinda. Here he played a pretty nice trick. Getting the heads of two dead men, he sent them over to Nowsherawan, with a letter to the following effect. "Landhour has killed Amir in the battle-field. I have killed Landhour and am sending the heads of both." The miscreant wrote another letter to Bukhtak giving him a true account of the affairs at Ceylon and telling him that he had sent an adverse letter to the King, so that Mehar Nigar might be married with some body else. Nowsherawan was grieved to learn the death of Amir and expressed to Buzurchemehar his sorrow for the loss of a gallant chieftain. The minister said he was prepared to say nothing definite regarding the affair since the science of geomancy prognosticated his safety and good health: of course, he appears to have suffered some bodily afflictions, which has undermined his constitution to a great extent, but there seems to be nothing else the matter with him.

When Amir was restored to health, his heart began to leap with unprecedented anxiety for his beloved Malka, whom he had left distressed. He therefore expressed his intention of leaving the lands of the Indies for Madayen, and Landhour agreeing to accompany him, placed his cousin on the throne of Ceylon, and started at the head of his troops. Adi had been sent ahead with tents, which he pitched in a fine delicious meadow, bordering the banks of a river. Amir arrived there the next day, passed the night in the tent, and then resumed his journey at day-break. Although he was pulled down from the effects of the deadly poison, and was scarcely able to sustain the hardships of a long and tedious journey, his eagerness to meet his sweetheart, rendered every difficulty easy to him, and he continued to make forced marches, as if, attracted by a magnetic stone.

To return to Bukhtak.—On receipt of Gushtaham's letter, this fellow conceived a fiendish idea of throwing an obstacle in the way of Amir's embracing his lovely angel. It occurred to him that Oswald, the son of Marzaban, who traced his descent from Kaikaos, was a suitable match for the princess, and must be induced to seek her hand before Amir returned to the city of Madayen. Thus taking the resolve, he at once wrote a letter to Oswald in the following terms,—“ Mehar Nigar, the daughter of Nowsherawan, is now in the full bloom of girlhood ; her hand was demanded by Hamzah, an Arab, but as he professed a different religion, the king wisely declined to accept his offer, and sent him on an expedition to Ceylon, where, I hear, he has been killed by Landhour. I therefore advise you, as a friend, to lose no time in starting for Madayen, so that I may get you married with the princess.”

On receipt of this letter, Oswald was transported with joy and started forthwith for Madayen, at the head of thirty thousand mounted soldiers. When he was reported to be coming, Bakhtak sought privacy with the king and said that Oswald, the son of Marzaban, who belonged to the family of Kae Kaos, had come from Zabul to pay his respects to the king, and that welcome should be accorded him, having regard to his position and respectable connections. Several chiefs were therefore ordered to receive him and he was encamped on Tilshadkam, where necessary arrangements were made for his comfort and convenience.

When all this came to pass in a satisfactory manner, Bakhtak introduced Oswald the next morning to the king, and had him invested with a set of robes. On getting an opportunity, he represented to the king that Hamzah having been killed in the battle with Landhour, it was necessary to get Mehar Negar married, but that she was not a suitable match for Gustaham, to whom the king had offered to give her hand, inasmuch as, he was old enough to be united to a lovely maiden of tender age. The king directed him to select a husband for her and he at once mentioned the name of Oswald, whom he applauded for his high birth, personal appearance, and intellectual gifts. The king consulted Malka Mehar Angez, who until that moment, had no intimation of Amir's death. She was grieved to hear this unhappy news, and became anxious for her daughter, who, she considered, would fall a ready victim to excessive mental affliction, as soon as, the unwelcome news would

find way into her ears. She warned her attendants not to carry the sad news to her, but the hubbub in the *harem* attracted her attention, and she at once became aware of the fact. Under the influence of a maddening conviction, she threw herself on her couch, tore her hair, beat her lovely white cheeks and gave way to the wildest excesses of grief. She uttered a terrible scream as she fell on her bed, and began accusing heaven, her father, and herself, of being the authors of her misfortunes. She kept rolling on the bed in the agony of torturing grief, and convulsive sobs stifled her voice. Mehar Angez flew to her raving daughter and tried to soothe her, but without effect. Horrified at the state of her mind she sent word to the king, who at once directed Buzurchemehar to go into the *harem*, reason with the princess and try to wean her heart from Amir in order to accept the hand of Owlad in a happy wed-lock.

Buzurchemehar entered the *harem* and calling the princess aside, told her confidentially as follows, "Malka, Amir is hale and hearty and perfectly safe. His adversaries have bruited abroad a malicious report against him with the avowed object of putting an impediment to the fulfilment of his fond desires. It is of course true that Gushtaham had played a devilish part in poisoning him, which gave him great afflictions, but thank God he has now recovered, and is on his way to Madayen. On the fortieth day hence, he will be here to embrace you, and you need not be anxious for him. Advisedly therefore accept Owlad's offer, so as to put a finishing stroke to all that is going on here, but let not marriage take place for forty days, nor permit Owlad to approach your presence till that time". The Malka agreed to accept the proposed alliance and Buzurchemehar coming out of the *harem* congratulated the king and said that the princess would not marry for forty days, as she wanted time to recover from the painful shock she had suffered from the sudden announcement of Amir's death.

Gratified at the turn of events the king sent for Owlad the next morning and after getting him invested him with a set of rich robes befitting the position of a son-in-law, desired him to wait for forty days after which the marriage would be solemnized. The delay, however, did not please the shrewd Bakhtak. He thought the arrangement fraught with evils, and whispered to Owlad that the period fixed by the king for the celebration of the marriage did not sound well, for Hamzah was yet safe, and if he returned by that time, the whole skein of machinations

would be unravelled. He therefore advised Owlád to express to the king his intention of having the nuptials celebrated in Zabul where he should have the pleasure of the society of his friends and relatives, his object being to take the bride with him before Hamzah returned to Madayen. Owlád acted up to the advice, and the king ordered the princess to be taken with the would-be bride-groom with all the paraphernalias of the proposed wedding.

When all arrangements were completed by Bakhtak, Owlád left Madayen with Malka for Zabul by regular marches full of joy and hopes. He kept the Malka's tent properly guarded wherever he happened to break his journey, and took particular care to watch her. For thirty nine days he went on without any mishap. On the fortieth day he came across a delightful hill commanding a beautiful landscape. Here he ordered the tents to be pitched and the felicity of his approaching marriage was uppermost in his heart. The Malka, on the other hand, waited patiently for the fortieth day foretold by Buzurchemehar. If Amir did not return in time to save her from the clutches of a devil, she would sacrifice her life and thus put an end to the fulfilment of Owlád's wishes.



CHAPTER XXV.

OWLAD TAKEN PRISONER AND SENT TO NOWSHERAWAN UNDER AN ESCORT.

IT so happened that on the day foretold Amir arrived by regular marches in the valley of the same hill where Owlad was encamped. Finding the place delightful and the weather agreeable, he expressed his intention of stopping there for a week to refresh himself from the fatigues of a long journey. All agreed to it, and the tents were ordered to be pitched at the foot of the hill. The physician who had accompanied Amir, found the place a delightful hunting ground, and ordered Amar to hunt a deer every day, roast its flesh and let Amir inhale the smell of the roasted meat, which would invigorate his constitution gradually. Amar proceeded towards the valley, found a flock of deer grazing the field, chased one, hunted it and then keeping the game in a secure place, went to the top of the hill to take a view of the landscape around. He espied a tent hard by on the other side of the hill and two persons standing on the bank of a stream with an ewer and basin of gold and silver, as if, waiting for some orders. Amar assumed a limping gait and shaking one of his hands drew up to them and after exchanging salutations asked them with utmost civility as to who they were, to whom the tent belonged, and in what duty they were employed. They answered readily that the tent belonged to the princess Mehar Nigar, the daughter of the king Nowsherawan, and they were her slaves. She had been first betrothed to an Arab by name Hamzah, but unluckily he fell in a battle with Landhour, the king of Ceylon. The princess has no doubt received a severe shock from this accident, but as the will of God would have it, consolation was the only relief and through the medium of Bakhtak, she has been betrothed to Owlad, the son of Marzaban, who is now taking her to Zabul for marriage. The princess has, however, learnt from Buzurchemehar that she will meet Sahebkarán on her way to Zabul on the fortieth of her journey, and she has therefore pledged Owlad by promise that until that time he must not try to seek her hand, nor dare approach her presence.

on any pretext whatever. This is the fortieth day foretold by Buzurchemehar. If Amir does not return by the dusk of the evening, the princess will end her life by swallowing poison. Nothing will be surprising, said Amar apparently moved, if Amir happens to be here this day to embrace his lovely angel. There is yet time and she must not despair of her lover. Saying this, he asked the two persons to let him have the use of their ewer and basin that he might wash his hands and legs. "One of my hands and legs," proceeded he, "has lost its motion; the only remedy the physician has advised is to wash them in a basin of silver with an ewer of gold. It was impossible for me to come by them, but fortune has thrown me in your way, and I pray that you will not deny me the indulgence of making use of them. This will, I hope, cure me radically and I shall ever be grateful to you for this piece of kindness." The men had no reason to doubt the sincerity of Amar's word, and after consulting with each other handed him over the ewer and basin. Amar received them with an air of composed gratification, and after taking water from the stream, washed his hands and legs. As soon as this was done, the slaves wanted their articles back, but Amar snuffed and jumping aside said gruffly that he was not fool enough to part with things which had become the means of his recovery. Saying this, he bolted off and took his way towards the tent of Owlad followed by the two men, who found him going in that direction. Approaching the tent of Owlad, he assumed the appearance of a soothsayer, and seating himself under a tree, cast his dice and astrolable. A number of men soon crowded around him and began questioning him on various subjects. The two slaves, who had followed Amar, finding a gathering of men, drew up to the pretended soothsayer and intended to ascertain from him about the thief. Scarcely had anything passed out of their lips, when Amar asked them abruptly if they had lost any thing like ewer and basin of gold and silver. The men finding him uttering the real fact without knowing it first were soon convinced of his professional skill, and one of them seated himself on his side, while the other ran to inform the princess of the arrival of a fortune-teller, who could give her precise information about Amir. The princess, who counted her time with acute suspense by seconds and minutes for the receipt of some hopeful intelligence relative to her long-lost lover, was startled at the announcement of a strange visit and the daring manner in which the robbery was committed. A vague suspicion took possession of her heart as to the identity of the sooth-sayer with Amar, who had tried to find

his way to Owlad's tent in an assumed shape. She sent for him at once, and seating herself behind the curtain, asked the man if he could tell what passed in her heart. The pretended sooth-sayer answered that unless he was shown the face of the inquirer, he could say nothing about him, and that if the Malka was at all anxious to be informed on any particular subject she must not hesitate in showing herself to him. The princess, who had already taken her resolve to die in case Amir did not arrive by the close of the day, cared not of appearing before a stranger in order to hear the account of her lover and she therefore ordered the man to be admitted within the tent, and when this was done, he threw his dice and expounded literally every thing that occurred from the beginning of her love with Amir till the date of his departure. The exactness with which the story of her love-tale was narrated soon convinced the princess that the so-called sooth-sayer was no other than Amar, and under the influence of a goading conviction, she tore off his false beard, and the clownish face of Amar was revealed as ridiculous as ever. The princess lost her patience, jumped off from her place, fell on Amar's arms, and weeping and sobbing asked about Amir's health. Amar informed her that Amir had arrived last evening and was encamped at the foot of the hill. The announcement sent a thrill of joy into the Malka's unsophisticated heart. She gave free vent to her tears, but Amar consoled her and asked her to compose herself.

While things were going thus, Owlad sent for the sooth-sayer to ascertain from him the suitable time when the marriage should take place. Amar proceeded to Owlad's tent and going there found him reclining on a costly chair inlaid with precious jewels. Owlad asked him why he had been sent for by the princess and he replied by saying that she wanted to know of a certain man, who was found dead ; that on hearing this unwelcome news, she was extremely sorry, but that he predicted her good luck with her new admirer and she appeared consoled and eventually consented to accept the proposed alliance. This happy turn of events made Owlad leap with joy ; a glow of animation passed over his face and he at once ordered Amar to be invested with a set of costly robes. After this, he asked the pretended sooth-sayer when he should marry and the latter said, the sooner the better. This pleased Owlad still more and he offered him a purse of gold mohurs in the ebullition of excessive joy. Amar thanked him for his generosity and while leaving the place, said : " My lord, I have four sons, one of

whom is a tumbler, the other a juggler, the third a drummer, and the fourth a flutist. Should you be pleased to witness their feats and skill, I have no doubt but that you would be infinitely rejoiced." "To-morrow at daybreak send all your boys," answered Owlad with an air of dignified composure, "and I shall gladly do ample justice to the skill of your men. The fun is of course worth seeing and I am quite sure that after finding you a capital man, I shall not fail to see your boys excellent men."

Taking leave of Owlad, Amar returned to the place, where he had kept his game. After resuming his original appearance he proceeded to the Physician, and under his instruction made Amir inhale the smell of the roasted meat. This done, he repaired to the tent of Landhour. On the way, he found Mokbil and ordered him to bring Adi at once to the tent of Landhour. To Landhour Amar related all about the princess and his adventure with Owlad. Landhour flew into a maddening rage on hearing the account, sprang to the feet, and wielded his ponderous war-club to give that pretender a signal blow. Amar wished him not to take any rash step, lest Amir should be sorry for it, but try to catch him alive, if this could possibly be done. By this time Mokbil arrived with Adi. Amar explained to them his plan, and all consented to follow it.

When the streaks of daylight shot forth from the eastern horizon, and the refulgent sun shed its flickering beams on the summit of the hill, Amar gave a drum to Adi, a flute to Mokbil and asked Landhour to handle his war-club, while he himself assuming the appearance of a beautiful boy undertook the duty of a tumbler. All these arranged, the party proceeded to the tent of Owlad. Amar showed his exercises first and was rewarded. Mokbil's turn came next, and he was much admired as a flutist. Adi acquitted himself remarkably well as a drummer. When Landhour was called in, he wheeled his war-club vehemently in the air. The spectators were horror-stricken, and cried out, stop! stop! Amar ogled Landhour to go on doing his work. He went on whirling and dashing right and left his tremendous war-club, until he gave a stroke to the pole of the tent, which brought the whole thing down, and Owlad was enveloped into the tent with all his companions. His army flew to the arm; a battle ensued and there was a vehement struggle. Landhour dashed through the assailants with a terrific yell. "Let it be

known to all who know me and who do not know, that I am Landhour, the king of Ceylon."—The troops of Landhour hearing him cry, unsheathed their bloody weapons and ran to the help of their royal master. A dreadful havoc was made: some ten thousand men of Owlád were slain and as many taken prisoners and five thousand wounded and the rest beat a retreat.

While Landhour was thus engaged, it occurred to Adi that as Owlád was going to be married that day there must be a variety of choicest food cooked for his guests. He therefore wended his way to Owlád's cook-room, but scarcely had he gone a few steps forward, when a man emerged from under the fallen tent. Adi pressed him so hard with one side of his drum that the skin tearing, he was pushed freely into it. Adi shut up the mouth of the drum at once and then entering the cook-room found a large assortment of pastry, meat and other choicest viands ready for the approaching feast. He gave himself freely up to the meal without fear of encroachment. While so engaged, Amar entered the cook-room searching Owlád. He found Adi loading his stomach freely regardless of what was going on outside, and incensed at his disagreeable conduct vociferated angrily. "O man of belly. You are called a notable hero in Amir's army. There is an open warfare going on without and it is a pity that at this critical time you should have concealed yourself in a corner of the cook-room and fallen greedily on an unwelcome repast." "I have also captured a man," replied Adi readily, "and I don't think I have rendered myself unworthy of my position." Amar advanced to the drum and peeping through one of its holes found in the alleged captive his most coveted game, for which he was so eagerly prowling about. He applauded Adi for his masterly piece of work, and ordered him to take the drum to Landhour. No sooner was the covering of the drum removed, than Owlád, who was foaming with maddening rage within his dark closet, jumped off the drum-hole with the quickness of a lightning and ran furiously upon Landhour with his drawn sword. Landhour tore off the weapon from his hand, knocked him down, and Amar soon tied him up with his noose.

All this was the work of a moment. The arrest of Owlád was at once communicated to the princess by Amar, who was abundantly rewarded. Leaving the princess he retraced his steps hastily to Amir and going over to him recounted all that had come to pass from the beginning to the end. Amir folded him to his breast joyfully, and expressed his heartfelt gratitude for

all that he had done for him. He resolved on sending back the princess to Nowsherawan with the prisoner carefully fettered, so as to leave his Majesty to deal with him as he liked. He therefore wrote a letter to the king in the following terms. "My august Monarch, in pursuance of your Majesty's order, I ventured a perilous journey to the lands of the Indies. I landed at Ceylon safely and subjugated the doughty hero, of the place, who had become the terror of your dominion. He is here and with me and has come to surrender himself to your Majesty at my will. The troubles and hardships I suffered with all my companions in my way to Ceylon are beyond conception, and I must not say how sorely was my heart embittered, when after this glorious victory, my death was maliciously reported to your Majesty and trumpeted over the length and breadth of your Majesty's dominions. To be sure, your Majesty was made the dupe of some mischief-monger, who persuaded you to offer the hand of the princess to Dowlad, but as the will of Almighty would have it, he fell with me on the way, was taken prisoner and is now being sent to your Majesty as captive under an escort that he and his confederates may be punished by your Majesty in the manner it may appear reasonable. I am also sending the princess back to her paternal abode and I hope to be with your Majesty soon to claim the hand of your daughter after your Majesty's promise." He handed over this epistle to Sultan Bakht for delivery to the king and ordered Amar at the same time to accompany the princess to Madayen, and as soon as he was safely lodged, to return from the place and meet him in the way. Amar departed with the princess, and while leaving Madayen, the physician asked him to bring, if possible, some *Yashdanu** for Amir, which was essentially needed to promote his health.

On arriving at Madayen Amar repaired to different shopkeepers and wanted the specific mentioned to him by the physician, but none could say about it. At last somebody told him that he must go to the king's court if he wanted the medicine, as such things could not be had except with the king.

Amar accordingly repaired to the king's court in the dress of a peasant and approaching the king's presence, laid a couple of pies before him and asked for the

medicine to cure his son, who, he said, was bitten by a serpent, modulating his voice and words in such a manner as to produce a ready impression of his rural simplicity on the mind of the audience. His village-like distorted words excited laughter in the king's court. The king ordered him to take back his pice and receive the medicine he wanted from the court, but he declined saying that it was not fair for him, however poor he was, to take any thing gratis. The king laughed outright and directed Buzurchemehar to take the man to the royal dispensary and give him three drams of the specific wanted.

Buzurchemehar complied with the king's order, gave the man three drams of the medicine and took as much for himself, inasmuch as, he was aware from the science of geomancy that Amir would be poisoned and be in need of *Noshdaru*; he was apparently unable to make out Amar in his disguise. Amar laughed in his sleeve, when he found the minister stealing out of the king's store, and while a little out of the way he threatened the minister to let him have also the quantity he retained for himself, otherwise he would bring disgrace upon him by divulging the secret of his theft. The minister fearing his threats and considering the man to be a simpleton likely to give out the secret immediately made over the remaining medicine and let him depart quietly.

While Buzurchemehar was ordered to give a quantity of *Noshdaru* to the so-called peasant, Bukhtak, who was fully aware of Amir's having been poisoned, had reasons to believe that Buzurchemehar would surely take some medicine out of the king's store for Amir's use, and thus settling his conviction, he insinuated to the king against the prime minister. The king was assured of Buzurchemehar's misconduct and ordered a search to be made about his person. Nothing, however, was discovered and Bukhtak was heavily fined. Buzurchemehar came to know afterwards that the peasant was no other than Amar and was rejoiced at heart that the medicine passed into the hand of one for whom he was so eagerly anxious.

Amar on coming out of the city gate resumed his original appearance and proceeded to the encampment of Islam. By this time Amir was so much altered from the effect of the deadly poison, that Amar on entering his tent mistook him for a stranger and asked him curiously as to who he was, whence he had come and if he could say where Amir was. "I am Qwlad

brother", said Amir changing his tone, "I happened to be here to release my brother but failing to find him, have avenged his cause with Amir". Scarcely had these words passed out of his lips when Amar ran upon him drawing his sword, but Amir dashed the weapon off from his hand and folding him to his breast exposed himself to him.

Amar made over the medicine to the physician and related to him how he succeeded in procuring it. The use of this medicine conduced to the steady increase of Amir's health, and he began to breathe more freely than before.

As regards Bahram, whose ships had been swept away by the current, the story goes, that the ships drifted on for several months, until it got ashore and cast its anchor at Sinda. Bahram landed here to purchase provisions for the crew: he walked to the market to make the necessary purchases, but after going a short distance, he espied a bow and a purse of thousand gold mohurs kept on a platform under a stately tree. He asked the sentries the reason, and was informed that Koh Bakht Hindi, the brother of the governor of the place, who was known as Sarkash Hindi, had kept the bow on the platform to test strength; if any body could pull this bow by the string and fix arrow on it, he was to take the purse of gold mohurs as reward. Bahram on hearing this walked to the platform, and lifting up the bow pulled the string to its usual length and then fixing the arrow on it, took the purse of gold mohurs and handed it over to his attendants. The sentries informed this fact to the governor, and they were asked to bring Bahram atonce to him. They ran after Bahram; and in a moment brought him to their chief. Bahram was treated with utmost civility by the governor and asked to pull the string of the bow again. He pulled the string, but this time so violently that the bow broke into two. Sarkash Hindi ordered Bahram to take his seat. He occupied the next chair to his right-hand. This chair was the seat of the governor's brother, Koh Bakht Hindi. No sooner did Bahram occupy his chair, than Koh Bakht appeared and finding his bow broken and Bahram occupying his seat, lost his temper and in a fit of ungoverning rage bounded towards him with his drawn sword. Bahram caught hold of his assailant and twisting his hand violently, tore off the weapon, and knocked him down. The governor interceded, and after apologizing to Bahram for his brother's misconduct asked him his name,

nationality and the circumstances which brought him there. Bahram gave out his name, nationality and other circumstances which brought him in contact with Amir ; as also, the accident which overtook him on his voyage to Ceylon. No sooner did the governor hear of Amir's name, than he heaved a deep sigh and accused Gustaham vehemently for his cowardly attempt in poisoning him. Bahram, who was not aware of Gustaham's treachery, became deadly pale when he heard of this appalling news from the lips of a trustworthy man. He sank under the weight of excessive mental anguish ; his noble heart became prey to torturing grief ; a shriek escaped his lips and he swooned. Restoratives were, however, immediately applied, and when he regained his senses, he asked Sarkash the source of his information. The governor said that Gustaham had come to his place a short time ago and he found him sending heads of Amir and Laudhour to Nowsherawan, but as he was little to be trusted, he had sent two scouts to Ceylon to ascertain the real fact. Bahram on hearing this story did not for a moment doubt the diabolical treachery played by the miscreant. He atonce made his determination to leave the place for Madayen and to wreak a deadly vengeance upon Nowsherawan for being instrumental in poisoning Amir. He therefore took the necessary provisions for the crew, and set sail his ships for Madayen. After six months the ship cast anchor at Balsora. Bahram landed with his four thousand fiery soldiers, and marched to Madayen at full speed in a fit of towering passion ordering his troops to plunder all the towns and villages that fell in their way. In this way he proceeded to the metropolis carrying death and desolation along. The news was brought to Nowsherawan, who atonce ordered Fowlad, the son of Gustaham, to proceed and satisfy Bahram that Amir was yet alive. Fowlad executed the order, but Bahram would not listen to him, because of his father's treachery. He challenged Fowlad to the encounter. There was a free fight and Fowlad ultimately succumbed to the mortal wound received from the weapon of Bahram.

When Fowlad fell in the battle, Bahram with his soldiers galloped to the city with irresistible fury and in an instant beleaguered the fort. Nowsherawan made another endeavour to assure him that Amir was alive, but without effect. The king was quite embarrassed ; he posted his troops on the parapets of the fort to keep the insurgents off from approaching the trenchmen, by showering shells and bullets, but Bahram was irresistible. Gallantly did he push his way through the thickest

of the bullets and in another instant he was below the fort-wall to break open the city gate. At this critical moment a cloud of dust arose at a short distance. A cavalcade of horse-men appeared from the midst of the dust, and shouts of satisfaction pealed forth from Nowsherawan's army, when Amir was seen at the head of the troops.

Bahram looked back in utter consternation and a galvanic thrill of joy passed through his heart when he caught the glimpse of Amir. He spurred his steed and was soon close upon his heels.

Amir received Bahram in his affectionate embrace and introduced him to Landhour. While he was engaged in discoursing with Bahram, a cavalier from the king brought him an intimation that His Majesty wished him to halt where he was in order that he might come himself to receive him into the town with all the pomp and grandeur becoming his rank. Amir obeyed the king's mandate and ordered his camps to be pitched accordingly.

The next day the king emerged from the town on his gigantic throne attended with all his nobles and *Sirdars* to receive Amir, while, on the other hand, Amir proceeded to meet him with all his companions. When the king was seen coming, Amir dismounted from his steed to kiss the throne. Nowsherawan folded him to his breast with all the flattering addresses and returning to the town, ordered his tents to be pitched as usual at Tilshadkam.

The next day Bakhtak seized an opportunity to represent to the king as follows.—“My lord, while Hamza was alone, he was viewed with terror by every one of your Majesty's dominion; he has now been associated with two brave and sturdy men, and it is not strange that one day he may attempt to usurp your Majesty's throne”. The king was alarmed and asked Bakhtak to adopt some plan to remove them one by one from his path. The miscreant suggested the king to speak to Amir in court that he wanted Landhour's head as a rebel and not to bring him alive or show him any clemency. The king ordered Bakhtak to do whatever he considered proper for the welfare of his kingdom. He was pleased to receive this order and when the court adjourned the next day, he expressed the king's wishes with

regard to Landhour in a loud and triumphant voice. Amir did not relish to hear this unpleasant order and said in reply that there was no good to behead a man when he had calmly surrendered himself to the throne. The wicked minister retorted that unless a rebel was punished with decapitation, the safety of the kingdom was never vouchsafed. The king's order was to cut off his head, and this ought to be carried out. Amir heard these rigmaroles with much reluctance, but yielding to the impulse of his noble spirit ordered Landhour to be sent for and submit to the king's order. Amar went to bring Landhour. He intimated to him the king's order. A cloud of indignation passed over his face, but he rose majestically to sacrifice himself for the sake of Amir, and tying his hands with a handkerchief intended to proceed to the king's court. Amar was piteously moved to find a hero in trouble and said. "Land-hour, you must not go to the Durbar like a captive ; get yourself properly armoured ; mount your elephant and attend the Durbar like a chieftain. Who the devil will dare cut your head ? Rest assured that before any injury befalls you, Hamza will offer his head and then all his Sirdars and myself". Landhour armoured himself to the teeth and wielding his monster war-club proceeded to the court. As soon as he was ushered into the king's antechamber, he began whirling the tremendous club in the air with such impetuosity that the people became horror-stricken, and thought that if it left the hold of Land-hour, it would crush the bones of many at a single stroke. Landhour's appearance in the court in giant-like shape created a deal of sensation among the people. The hue and cry raised on that account brought a crowd of people together. The king became apprehensive of the ultimate result, but dared not essay a word after what the wicked minister had suggested him as the only means to exterminate evil. Amir being informed of Landhour's arrival, entered the antechamber and ordered him to submit to the king's order. Landhour laid aside his war-club, sat down quietly on a platform and offered himself to be beheaded. Amir ordered Adi to cut off his head. He approached Landhour, but was overpowered by a fellow feeling, and sat down by his side stating "Let my head be cut ere Landhour's is attempted". On this Bahram was ordered to act off the head, but like Adi he became Landhour's second companion and offered his head to be cut off first. The third man sent to cut off Landhour's head was Sultan Bahut. His heart melted as soon as he reached within the sight of Landhour and he seated himself beside his other companions

to offer his head.—This turn of events did not please Bakhtak ; he ordered with a yell of savage rage to send for the public executioner and cut off the head of all. The executioner appeared on the scene and as he was about to deal a fatal blow, Malka Mehar Angez was startled by the noise, and going upstairs with her daughter, the princess Mehar Nigar, asked her the reason of the confusion. The princess pointed her out Landhour as the king of Ceylon and said that under the mischievous influence of Bakhtak, the king had ordered him to be beheaded. The Malka was moved and ordered Landhour to be released. The king was informed of Malka's order, but he observed silence being afraid of the Queen's displeasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH OF MALKA MEHAR NIGAR BY BAKHTAK'S MOTHER, AMIR'S AFFLICTIONS, AND THE MURDER OF THE OLD CRONE BY AMAR.

WHEN the king entered the *seraglio* after the council was dismissed, he asked Malka Mehar Angez the reason of her ordering the release of Landhour and she said in reply that in the first place Landhour, in spite of his prowess and gallantry, showed no sign of revolt, but surrendered himself meekly when called upon to offer his head; in the second place it did not savour of a monarch to split the blood of a king or chieftain in so cowardly a manner; thirdly, when such an act of cowardice on the part of a monarch would get abroad, all his chiefs, heroes and princes would commence to mistrust him, and fourthly, if Landhour were thus killed, Hamzah would not rest for a moment to desolate the whole town to avenge the blood of his gallant friend. The king admired at the queen's sagacity, but heaved a deep sigh and said mournfully—"alas! no means could be devised to remove Hamzah from his way". At this time Sakargaz Bano, Bakhtak's mother was present with the Queen. Hearing the king uttering these words she rose up with her hands folded and solicited the king's permission to serve him in securing the object of his heart. The king asked her plan and she represented as follows. "Tomorrow when the court reassembles, Hamzah may be told publicly that his marriage will take place after a week. When arrangements for the approaching wedding will be going on, I shall keep the princess in her bridal chamber, which shall be the subterranean room of the Queen's palace, and when a couple of days have quietly passed, I shall spread a report of her illness and on the fourth day will give out that she has succumbed to the fatal malady. The princess's death will be received with thunderbolt effect by Amir and there is no doubt but that he will immediately commit suicide in despair. The king approved of the crone's malignant advice and the next day asked Amir to make preparations for his marriage.

Amir was rejoiced at the prospect of his happy wedlock and returning to his tent ordered matrimonial arrangements to be made ; while, on the other hand, Bakhtak's mother took Mehar Nigar to a place of seclusion, assuring her that ceremony demanded her temporary retreat from public society. Joyously did the princess immure herself in her subterranean confinement and the old hag did not fail to exert her influence upon her simple and generous heart. After a couple of days, she gave out that the princess was ailing and on fourth day she raised a heart-rending alarm relating to her death. The ominous news was received by Amir in all his hideous spectacle—a searing, harrowing and most heart-rending news it was no doubt for a man whose heart was clung to that lovely agent—indeed, Amir received a severe shock from this lamentable news : he reeled, tottered and fell heavily to the ground under the weight of excessive mental afflictions, and in a fit of goading despair was about to plunge his sword into his bosom, when Landhour and Bahram bounded forward and tore off the weapon from his hand.

Amar suspected some deep treachery in the whole proceeding and taking leave of Amir stole forth from his tent in the hope of finding the exact news relative to Malka's death. He made direct to Malka's palace and sent intimation of his arrival to Malka Mehar Angez. Bakhtak's mother, who was present there, advised the queen to call in Amar, so that he might be assured of the Malka's death from the wailings and lamentations in the *harem*. Amar was admitted into the palace and he found one and all clothed in black and mourning. At this time Sakargaz Bano appeared and after whispering something into the queen's ear retraced her steps hastily. Amar's suspicion was aroused and he reflected some deep treachery beneath the glossy machinations of the crafty woman. He followed her foot-steps quietly and after going a few paces assumed the shape of an old woman, and glided along with her into an adjoining garden. The crone was startled at the sound of the foot-steps, but before she could question her follower, Amar sprang forward and fixing the noose upon her neck pulled her down, and after killing her by strangulation, deposited her remains under the heap of dry leaves in a corner of the garden and then instantly assuming her shape, sauntered about in the garden in the hope of finding some news in respect of the princess. Shortly after a girl emerged from a side of the garden and asked the assumed old woman to attend the princess, who was waiting for

her. Amar said nothing, but followed her quietly to the Malka's chamber. He was surprised to find her decorated in all her bridal gaiety and cheering with her companions most unaffectedly. The princess asked the pretended woman where she was all this time and why she looked so apathetic in the performance of the duties imposed upon her regarding the proposed wedding. Amar after giving her a suitable reply, sought privacy, and when he was alone with the princess, revealed himself to him and related how the news of her death had been malignantly spread abroad to frustrate her intention of taking Amir for her husband; how Amir had suffered on her account and how he could find his way into the *harem* and finally succeeded in tracing her out.

Having thus explained to the princess in a few words the drama of the outer scene, Amar hastened back to Amir and communicated to him all that he had seen. Amir was rejoiced to hear of the Malka's health and rewarded Amar handsomely. When all this passed off satisfactorily, Amar conceived an idea of retaliating the troubles which Amir had suffered by the mischievous exposure of the Malka's death, and advised Amir to attend the Darbar in mourning dress with Landhour and other chieftains and ask the king to order the coffin of the deceased princess to be taken out for funeral observances. Amir approved of this suggestion and dressed in black attended the Darbar with all his chosen companions. Here he found every body in grief, wailing and weeping for the Malka's death. Solemnly did Amir step into the court and taking his usual seat remained downcast as if absorbed in distressful circumstance. A deep melancholy pervaded the scene, and after a brief pause, he desired the king to order for the Malka's bier, so that he might pay the last tribute of his affection to the princess by attending her funeral. The king send word to the queen, who replied that the Malka's coffin could not be taken out of the *harem*, but during the night, when the funeral ceremonies would take place.

The day passed in mourning and wailing and a deep sensation prevailed in the king's court, as well as, in the *harem*. Bakhtak's mother was searched for, but no trace of the old hag found. The inmates of the house became anxious for her, and late in the evening succeeded in tracing out her corpse under the heap of dry leaves. This the queen took as the fair opportunity to deceive Amir and his companions, and so ordered a coffin to be prepared.

The coffin of the old hag was taken out and carried to the royal cemetery with the usual enthusiasm. Torches and flambeaus were burnt and fire-works let off. The *Sasanis* and *Kyanis*

attended by their priest accompanied the bier and chanted the hymns of prayer and invoked blessings to the departed soul of the princess. Amar mixed with them and finding Bakhtak within his reach, let off a fire-work within his sleeve. The wretch was in blaze and he plunged himself at once into the nearest pool. Amar left the place immediately whispering to him in the midst of his agony that the deceased was no other than his mother, who was going to be buried. The wretch murmured a few incoherent words and then held quiet. The corpse of the old hag was buried by its attendants and Bakhtak after bathing himself in the water, returned home haggard and down-trodden; the announcement of his mother's death doubling his afflictions, and he gave vent to volleys of imprecations against those who brought on him so much miseries.

The treachery regarding the Malka's death was now fully exposed. The king made excuses to Amir and attributed the whole thing to the rascality of the Bakhtak's mother, who, he said, had been fully avenged. He asked Amir to forget all that had taken place, and the latter declared himself submissive. When the king and Amir were thus mutually reconciled, the latter wished the date of marriage to be settled, and the king informed him that the marriage would take place after forty days. Amir consented to the king's proposal, but the shrewd Amar not relishing any undue delay, interceded and got the date of marriage fixed early, and at the same time obtained from the king a letter of his Majesty's avowal of the proposed alliance. When Bakhtak was informed that the king had given a letter of assurance to Amir in respect of his marriage with the princess and that nuptials were to take place shortly, his rancorous spirit was inflamed and he ground his teeth in concentrated rage at the king's indiscretion. He was not quite cured of the blisters caused by the fire, yet he could not tarry another moment to reflect on the matter, which looked so ominous to him and wended his way to the court in the midst of extreme mental anguish and torturing grief. On appearing at the Darbar, he sought privacy with the king and remonstrated with him for the inconsiderate step he had taken against the honour of his family in promising to offer the hands of his daughter to a person who did not belong to his religion. The king said he could not do otherwise than what he did, and unless some effective means were forthcoming to avert the present arrangement, he could not alter his proposition. Bakhtak assured the king that he would settle down matters at Lingure's stroke, and his Majesty agreed to his working at the

bottom in order to frustrate Hamza's design. The scheme that developed into the mind of the miscreant was that he thought of sending to the court the next morning two or three men from among the king's employes to explain that the subordinate chiefs had withheld revenue and turned them out from their kingdoms with their noses and ears ignominiously cut, saying that they would not submit to the king, who was disposed to unite the hands of his daughter to an Arab believing in the unknown God.

When the court re-assembled in the next morning, Bakhtak followed his preconcerted arrangement. The appearance in court of such persons as described above, roused the martial blood of Amir, especially because the turbulent spirit on the part of the subordinate king was said to have been displayed on his account only. He rose abruptly from his seat, and handling his weapon emerged from the court swearing that he would not marry until he had avenged the insult done to the king, and realized the full revenue from the insurgents.

Leaving Bahram with the king, Amir returned to his tent, and the next day marched at the head of twelve thousand mounted soldiers. The king ordered Karan Deoband, who had been posted to guard the Malka's palace, to accompany Amir, but as he cherished a feeling of animosity against him, the latter agreed to take him with much reluctance on condition of his being punished with decapitation, if he proved himself in any way disloyal or inimical to him.

To Karan, the king handed over several letters to the subordinate chiefs telling them that Hamza had been sent out to demand revenue under special circumstance. They must not, however, pay him a penny, but, on the other hand, try to kill him in open warfare and send his head to him as a trophy of war.

Amir while leaving Madayen wrote a letter, which he handed to Amar to be taken to his father, and the latter, therefore proceeded to Mecca with it.

FINIS.



